United Nations ESCAP/RFSD/2018/1*

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
1 February 2018

Original: English

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Bangkok, 28–30 March 2018
Item 2 of the provisional agenda**
Regional perspectives on the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Regional and subregional perspectives on the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies

Note by the secretariat***

Summary

The aim of the present document is to advance the dialogue on the readiness of the region to deal with an increasingly complex risk profile, focusing attention on the specific resilience capacities needed not only to adapt to but also to effect the transformations presented in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It contains a description of how resilience is addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals and of the main drivers of the changing risk profile in the region, including from the subregional perspective. The concepts discussed are illustrated by quantitative analysis in relation to trade networks, food systems and climate change. Empirical analyses show that 73 per cent of critical food trade networks in the region show signs of reduction in resilience properties. The report concludes with recommendations on strengthening resilience capacities that can promote transformations in line with the 2030 Agenda.

I. Introduction

1. The present document contains information on regional and subregional perspectives on the theme of the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development, "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies".

2. The aim of the present document is to advance the dialogue on the readiness of the region to deal with an increasingly complex risk profile and the specific resilience capacities needed not only to adapt to but also to effect the transformations envisioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In part, the analysis herein draws on the framing and discussions of a joint report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations

* Reissued for technical reasons on 27 February 2018.

** ESCAP/RFSD/2018/L.1.

*** The present document was submitted late owing to the need to incorporate additional inputs.

Please recycle

Development Programme (UNDP) for the regional preparations for the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2018.

3. The present document has a focus on resilience as a characteristic of systems and contains a proposal for an analytical framework to explore the theme of transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies, based on a three-step approach: firstly, to identify sources and drivers of risks and how those risks interact; secondly, to analyse how emerging risks affect different critical systems in society (for example, food systems and economic and financial systems) and which sections of society are most vulnerable to those elevated risks; and thirdly, to identify the resilience capacities that need to be strengthened to address each specific risk and the appropriate policy measures to do so. This three-step analytical framework was found useful in guiding the deliberations at the subregional level[1] and could be useful for countries and communities in their attempts to strengthen resilience.

4. The present document is organized in five sections. Section I is an introduction. Section II places the concept of resilience within the context of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. Section III contains the analytical framework outlined above, together with examples of policy interventions from the region. Section IV contains an illustration of the application of the analytical framework to the case of the food system in the region, in order to convey its usefulness to policymakers. Section V contains a discussion on how to strengthen the transformative capacity, a capacity often lacking in even the most advanced societies in the region, and proposals for practical measures to build that capacity. The focus on building transformative capacity is in line with the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2018. Further, it responds to the specific request conveyed by stakeholders during the discussions at the subregional level to identify practical ways to strengthen the transformative capacity of communities.

II. Resilience and the 2030 Agenda

5. Resilience in the context of the 2030 Agenda refers to the ability of human systems to withstand and recover from plausible hazards. Such hazards can include a wide spectrum of impacts of natural, economic and human-made crises, from droughts that endanger food security to financial instability and demographic shifts that amplify poverty. The region has several successful examples of demonstrating or strengthening resilience to risks related to economic, social and environmental dimensions that provide scope for mutual learning and exchanging of lessons within the region around the theme of resilience (see the box and section III for more examples).

[1] In preparation for the fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, ESCAP facilitated five multi-stakeholder subregional discussions. These events, organized in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 27 and 28 September 2017, in Beijing on 10 and 11 October 2017, in Bangkok, on 18 and 19 October 2017, in Apia on 1 and 2 November 2017, and in Kathmandu on 1 and 2 November 2017, were attended by government officials and representatives of civil society, academia and business sectors.

Box

Selected success stories of resilience building from Asia and the Pacific

The remarkable resilience of the region to the 2008 global economic and financial crisis

The Asia region was one of the regions that exhibited strong resilience during the global economic and financial crisis that erupted in 2008. One of the key reasons cited for this is the region's learning from the Asian financial crisis of 1997, which resulted in strengthened early warning systems and institutions at the national and regional levels, which increased the region's ability to prevent and withstand shock. Further, several countries began to strengthen macroprudential policies as an integral part of their financial stability toolkits, overhauled their financial regulations and substantially increased oversight of financial institutions. These measures helped reduce risk-taking by households and firms before the global financial crisis in 2008. These reforms have also increased the ability of economies to address new risks associated with increased cross-border capital flows and greater integration with the rest of the world, more volatile external conditions and higher risk premiums.[a] However, the global crisis brought to the forefront other global vulnerabilities and system weaknesses which have implications for Asia.

Building resilience to infectious diseases, Republic of Korea

Though the Government of the Republic of Korea initially struggled to control the outbreak of Middle East respiratory syndrome in 2015, it used the outbreak as a way to transform preparedness to address risks of any infectious disease. Based on comprehensive consultations with the National Assembly, health expert groups, the World Health Organization and other stakeholders, in September 2015 the Government produced 48 reform measures to enhance its capacity to prevent, detect and respond to emerging infectious disease threats and public health emergencies like Middle East respiratory syndrome. The reform initiatives focused on the state-of-the-art point of entry quarantine system; rapid and effective emergency response; investment in controlling disease infection; the transformation of governance with regard to infectious diseases; and an enabling environment to reduce infections within medical institutions. The Government translated its lessons learned from the event into concrete actions to strengthen resilience and not only revised legislation but expedited funding and implemented the legislation.[b]

Multi-hazard early warning systems

The Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia is an intergovernmental institution, owned and managed by more than 30 member States and collaborating countries. Established in 2009 with support from the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries, the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System allows member States to gather information at much lower costs than are possible with individual early warning systems, particularly for high-impact, low-frequency hazards. Its services include localized and customized severe weather and short-term weather information that supports contingency planning. It also offers medium-term weather information for logistics planning, as well as longer-term climate outlooks for resource planning and management. In addition, it analyses risks of climate variability and change, identifies risk management and adaptation options, and develops new-generation risk-information products. It also offers decision-making support tools, including risk assessment and interpretation, and translates early warning information into impact outlooks and response options. It is a good example of a regional initiative to strengthen resilience against emerging risks.

[a] Phakawa Jeasakul, Cheng Hoon Lim and Erik Lundback, "Why was Asia resilient? Lessons from the past and for the future", IMF Working Paper, No. WP/14/38 (Washington, D.C., International Monetary Fund, 2014). Available from www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2014/wp1438.pdf.

[b] Republic of Korea, Ministry of Health and Welfare, *The 2015 MERS Outbreak in the Republic of Korea: Learning from MERS* (2015) (in Korean only). Available from www.cdc.go.kr/CDC/intro/CdcKrIntro0101.jsp?menuIds=HOME001-MNU1154-MNU0005-MNU0010&cid=70039.

6. Resilience is specified in the targets and means of implementation of several Sustainable Development Goals, including the targets of enhancing the resilience of poor and vulnerable groups (target 1.5), promoting resilient agricultural practices (target 2.4), investing in resilient infrastructure (target 9.1 and means of implementation 9.a), building resilient cities and human settlements (means of implementation 11.b and 11.c), increasing resilience to climate-related hazards and natural disasters (target 13.1) and strengthening resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems (target 14.2). The lack of data to monitor progress across these targets is a major challenge, highlighting the importance of disaggregated data to achieve the ambition of leaving no one behind. The following paragraphs present some highlights from the Asia-Pacific region on those targets and means of implementation.

7. While considerable progress has been made in the past decades to reduce poverty in Asia and the Pacific, the region must increase efforts to strengthen the resilience of all groups in society against the risk of impoverishment and social disadvantages. Persons living in least developed countries face a 60 per cent risk of poverty despite employment (compared to 12 per cent in Asia and the Pacific as a whole) and are 10 times less likely to receive social insurance benefits.[2]

8. Many countries in the region need to pay more attention to food security and diversification of food systems and to growth in the agricultural sector. In least developed countries, agricultural productivity that is vital to food security has only increased by 31 per cent from 2000 to 2013, while it doubled in high-income countries, widening the gap.[2] A total of 90 million hectares of agricultural land was lost between 2000 and 2013, due to land degradation and conversion to other uses, and the region has the world's highest rate of mineral fertilizer use per hectare.[3] In addition, in recent years, the agricultural sector has borne the brunt of natural hazards and absorbed almost 17 per cent of their total economic impacts. Since agriculture is linked to industry and services through both demand and production, a reduction in output can further slow overall economic growth.[4]

9. The infrastructure needs of the region are diverse and substantial; costs are projected to equal approximately $26 trillion between 2016 and 2030 in the region's developing countries, particularly in power and transport.[3] In order to climate proof this infrastructure, another $41 billion in annual investment would be required. Approximately 560 million people in the region still live in slums with poor-quality housing, insecure residential status, and inadequate access to safe water and sanitation.[3] Poorly managed urbanization on the back of environmental degradation in a region acutely affected by climate change is threatening to undermine sustainable development efforts, destroying vital ecosystems, and leading to detrimental health impacts from pollution, threats to food security, conflicting urban-rural resource demands and rising inequality.

---

[2] ESCAP, *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2016: SDG Baseline Report* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.II.F.1). Available from www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP_SYB2016_SDG_baseline_report.pdf.

[3] ESCAP, ADB and UNDP, *Asia Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Outlook* (Bangkok, 2017). Available from www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/232871/asia-pacific-sdgoutlook-2017.pdf.

[4] *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2017: Leave No One Behind - Disaster Resilience for Sustainable Development* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.II.F.16). Available from www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/0_Disaster%20Report%202017%20High%20res.pdf.

10. Disaster impacts have been undermining the region's economic growth, with costs quadrupling to about 0.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in recent decades.[4] The region's rapid, yet largely unsustainable, economic growth has increased the exposure of people and assets to natural hazards, increasing risks in a region that is already facing more frequent and intense natural disasters than any other. Although it is the world's most disaster-prone region, only one-third of Asia-Pacific countries report having disaster risk-reduction strategies, and the death toll from climate-related disasters remains 20 times higher than the global average. Measures to increase resilience are urgently needed.

11. Although the proportion of total territorial waters under protection on average across the region increased to 31 per cent at the country level since 2000, mainly among small island developing States, efforts to strengthen marine and coastal ecosystem resilience must be accelerated significantly.[2] In the Coral Triangle region alone, more than 85 per cent of reefs are threatened by local stressors, such as overfishing and pollution (versus the global average of 60 per cent), which increases to a staggering 90 per cent when combined with stress from ocean warming and coral bleaching (versus the global average of 75 per cent).[5]

III. Building the resilience of human systems: an analytical framework to guide policymaking

12. A resilient society tries not only to respond to disruption and crisis with efforts to bring the system back into balance but also tries to develop solutions, safeguards and risk management strategies that bring the system to a new state in which it can deal with present and future challenges. Resilience incorporates the ability of individuals, communities, businesses, local markets and systems to survive, adapt and grow in the face of stress and shocks, convert risks into opportunities and even transform when conditions require it. Therefore, resilience also provides a basis for understanding and developing strategies for sustainable transformation.

13. However, operationalizing the concept of resilience is often quite challenging across different areas and sectors and to policymakers. The analytical framework to approach the links between resilience and sustainable development from a policymaker's perspective, proposed here, uses a three-step process. Firstly, identify the sources of new and emerging risks in society. Secondly, map the critical systems in society that these risks will affect and who will be most vulnerable to the potential impact of risks on these systems. Thirdly, policymakers should formulate their policy responses to enhance certain specific resilience capacities to strengthen society's resilience to emerging risks.

A. What are the sources of risks in the Asia-Pacific region?

14. The Asia-Pacific region faces exogenous and endogenous trends that may entail risks and challenges while also creating opportunities. These fundamental drivers operate outside the remit of political decision-making and are sometimes hard to influence; they can be described as megatrends which act as the backdrop to building resilience and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

---

[5] World Resources Institute, *Reefs at Risk Revisited in the Coral Triangle* (Washington D.C., 2012). Available from www.wri.org/sites/default/files/pdf/reefs_at_risk_revisited_coral_triangle.pdf.

15. These drivers have been explored at the regional level previously and include demographic change, rural-urban transition, increasing demand for natural resources and increasing pollution, regional economic cooperation and integration, climate change and technological progress.[6] They can bring important opportunities that will aid countries in their pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, each of these megatrends are expected to pose risks to social, food, energy and other systems; risks which particularly threaten the most vulnerable in society.

16. More than the direct risks stemming from these drivers, it is their interactions with other drivers that are fundamentally altering the risk profile of the region. The interactions between wider development trends, shocks and internal risk factors lead to increasingly complex and unpredictable outcomes. What used to be a localized risk can now become a global crisis due to increasingly integrated trade networks and global value chains. As an example, in 2007 and 2008 extreme weather and disasters in parts of the region led to reduced wheat yields and contributed to higher prices of various food commodities worldwide. This exacerbated ongoing political crises in many countries, and food protests and riots broke out in 48 countries.[7]

B. Which systems and communities are most vulnerable to emerging risks?

17. One way to understand better how these megatrends pose increasingly complex risks for society is to study their impact on critical human systems, whose co-existence is crucial for the functioning of society. Some of the main components are the economic system (which determines resource allocation in societies), the financial system (which comprises the exchange and circulation of financial resources), social systems (comprising education, health and social security), provisioning systems (which includes food, energy, water and other important provisioning elements) and the broader environmental system. All these systems are interlinked; they support and complement each other for the functioning of a society. The broader regulatory system (which includes the political arrangements, legal arrangements, cultural norms, scientific knowledge and communications system) of the society govern the interlinkages and interactions between most of these systems.

18. In all subregions, discussions highlighted the interlinked nature of the risks posed by various drivers and trends on critical human systems. One example is the impact of demographic changes, especially the impact of aging and de-population on social systems. A second example is that of rural-urban transitions, which were frequently linked to a youth bulge in cities. Where young people face situations of unemployment and precarious or informal work situations and are not able to contribute financially to the cities' economies, it was considered a risk to the financial system. A third example is that increasing pollution, fuelled by the increasing use of natural resources, threatens the environmental system and is affecting the provisioning system. A fourth example is that climate change is projected to have far-reaching impacts on human systems. Those impacts on food systems and social systems in particular are seen as linked to and potentially creating conflict and security risks. And finally, regional economic integration has led to the increased

[6] For a discussion of these megatrends, see ESCAP, ADB, and UNDP, *Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing Asia-Pacific* (Bangkok, 2017).

[7] Cullen Hendrix and Henk-Jan Brinkman, "Food insecurity and conflict dynamics: causal linkages and complex feedbacks", *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* (June 2013).

availability of cheaper and unhealthy food choices. Driven by these changes in dietary patterns, there is now an alarming rise of non-communicable diseases in many countries of the region which has been increasing stress on the health systems in some countries.

19. The impact of these risks on different human systems will have varying impacts on different groups in society. They are likely to reinforce and exacerbate pre-existing social vulnerabilities in some countries (for example, caste-based discrimination in South Asia) and affect remote rural communities or coastal communities (for example, through the displacement of a large number of fishers and the reallocation of lands for tourism purposes in South-East Asia after the 2005 tsunami). The groups most affected by the negative impacts include youth, older persons, indigenous populations, urban informal sector migrants, unskilled and informal workers, persons with disabilities, women, children, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Because of the way impacts intersect and overlap, some vulnerable groups are more exposed to complex risks. It is therefore important to strengthen the resilience of communities and groups of people that face increasingly complex risk profiles.

20. To give an example, across all five subregions, urban informal sector migrants, especially those living in slums, were identified as a group that will be most impacted by the emerging risks to critical human systems. Although the proportion of the overall population that resides in urban slums in Asia and the Pacific is smaller than it was two decades ago, the absolute number continues to rise.[8] Slum dwellers are more exposed to vagaries of climate change as informal settlements tend to be in neighbourhoods that are more vulnerable to extreme weather events. Almost half a billion urban residents in Asia and the Pacific live in coastal areas, with increased vulnerability to storm surges and sea-level rise. It is estimated that up to 77 million urban residents in Asia and the Pacific could potentially fall back into poverty as a result of climate change impacts.[9] At the same time, these slum dwellers are the least protected from the increasing impact of pollution on critical environmental and provisioning systems (especially water and air).[10]

C. Framing resilience responses around capacities

21. Once drivers of risks are identified, together with the critical human systems that they impact and the people who are most vulnerable to these impacts, policies and interventions need to be made to strengthen resilience. Policy and institutional interventions that strengthen resilience capacities are an important means of operationalizing resilience.[11] Four resilience capacities are commonly highlighted in the literature and can inform national, regional

[8] ESCAP, ADB, UNDP, *Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing Asia-Pacific* (Bangkok, 2017).

[9] World Bank, "Urban development", 2 January 2018. Available from worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview#1.

[10] Marife M. Ballesteros, "Linking poverty and the environment: evidence from slums in Philippine cities", PIDS Discussion Paper Series, No. 2010–33 (Makati City, Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2010). Available from https://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps1033.pdf.

[11] Christopher Béné and others, "Resilience: new utopia or new tyranny? Reflection about the potentials and limits of the concept of resilience in relation to vulnerability reduction programmes", IDS Working Paper, vol. 2012, No. 405 (Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, United Kingdom, 2012).

and subregional responses: absorptive, anticipatory, adaptive and transformative capacities.[12] The following paragraphs include definitions of these capacities and examples from the region on ways to strengthen them.

1. Absorptive capacity

22. Absorptive capacity refers to the ability of social systems to absorb and cope with the impacts of shocks and stresses. This refers to the ability of social systems to manage and recover from adverse conditions mainly using available skills and resources. The higher the stock of diverse forms of capital, whether human, social, manufactured, financial or natural, the less severe the long-term impact of a particular shock on the availability and diversity of resources at the disposal of a society is likely to be.

23. Social protection schemes can play a significant role in strengthening absorptive capacity, as it, for example, smoothens consumption as well as capital and maintains political and social stability. Workfare programmes such as the one created by the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in India, which guarantees employment for a stipulated number of days every year, is an example of a policy that can strengthen the absorptive capacity of individuals while simultaneously creating productive public infrastructure.[13]

2. Anticipatory capacity

24. Anticipatory capacity refers to the ability of social systems to anticipate and reduce the impact of shocks through preparedness and planning. This is seen in actions taken before an event to avoid upheaval, either by avoiding or reducing exposure or minimizing vulnerability to specific disturbances. Countries in the region have increased their anticipatory capacity in response to natural and other types of disasters, including through vulnerability assessments, early warning systems, exclusion mapping and inclusion monitoring tools, assessment of earthquake damages, the creation of specialized task forces, disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response plans, and subregional cooperation to support the most marginalized communities.

25. Successful examples of strengthening anticipatory capacity includes establishing early warning systems such as the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (see box) and the early warning system established by Pacific countries to anticipate risks posed by climate change. At the same time, establishing appropriate communication channels and effectively communicating the information collected is an essential element of building anticipatory capacity. For example, in the Philippines, where dengue fever recurs every year, a poster that communicated

[12] Aditya V. Bahadur and others, "The 3As: tracking resilience across BRACED", BRACED Working Paper (London, BRACED, 2015). Available from www.farmafrica.org/downloads/braced.pdf.

[13] Dave Steinbach and others, *Aligning Social Protection and Climate Resilience: A Case Study of MGNREGA and MGNREGA-EB in Andhra Pradesh* (London, International Institute for Environment and Development, 2016). Available from http://pubs.iied.org/10156IIED.

ways to prevent it was distributed to households; this was found to help reduce dengue fever by 60.5 per cent in a short interval of time.[14]

3. Adaptive capacity

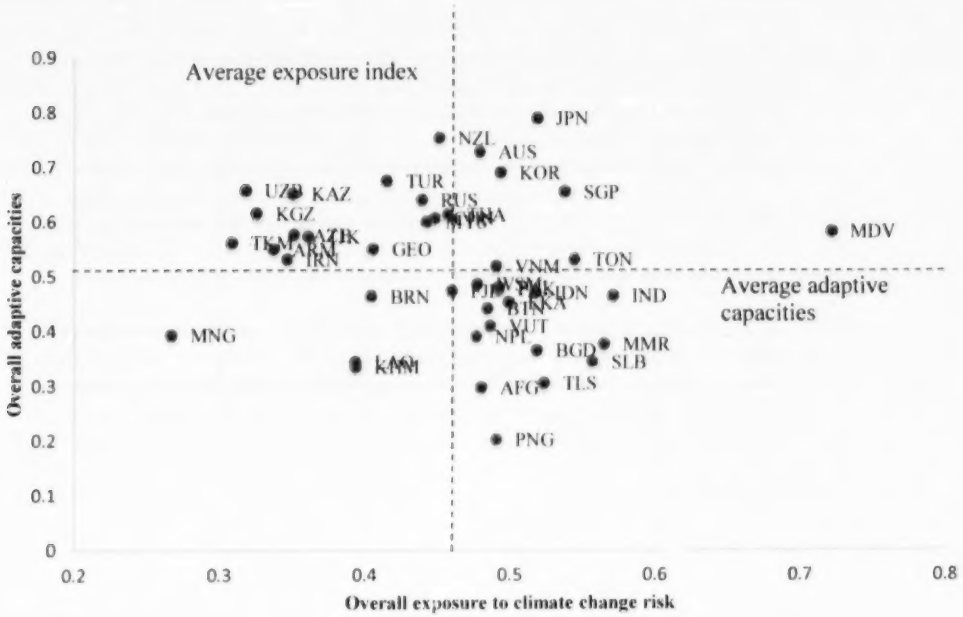
26. Adaptive capacity refers to the ability of social systems (for example households, communities or nations) to adapt to multiple, long-term and future risks and also to learn from and refine responsive capacities after a disaster. It describes the ability to take deliberate and planned decisions even when conditions have changed or are about to change in order to achieve a desired state. At the subregional consultations, it was emphasized that traditional knowledge, education and know-how can be a resource for building adaptive and absorptive capacities. Building adaptive capacity, for instance, includes diversification of crops and livestock to adapt to the effects of climate change and faster adaptation and scaling up of new technologies to fight pollution.

27. ESCAP research shows (figure I) that many countries that have lower adaptive capacities[15] to climate change-related risks are also the ones that are most exposed to those risks (lower right quadrant). Countries in this situation need to take urgent measures to build their adaptive and other related capacities to strengthen their resilience.

[14] "Case study: how the Manila Department of Health fought dengue fever", *Campaign* (Hong Kong), 25 September 2012. Available from www.campaignasia.com/article/case-study-how-the-manila-department-of-health-fought-dengue-fever/316804.

[15] Adaptive capacities are measured as aggregate adaptive capacities along the following human systems, namely, health, food, habitat, water, infrastructure and ecosystems.

Figure I
Level of adaptive capacities and overall exposure to risk from climate change



Source: ESCAP calculations based on data from the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index dataset, 2016. Available from https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/.

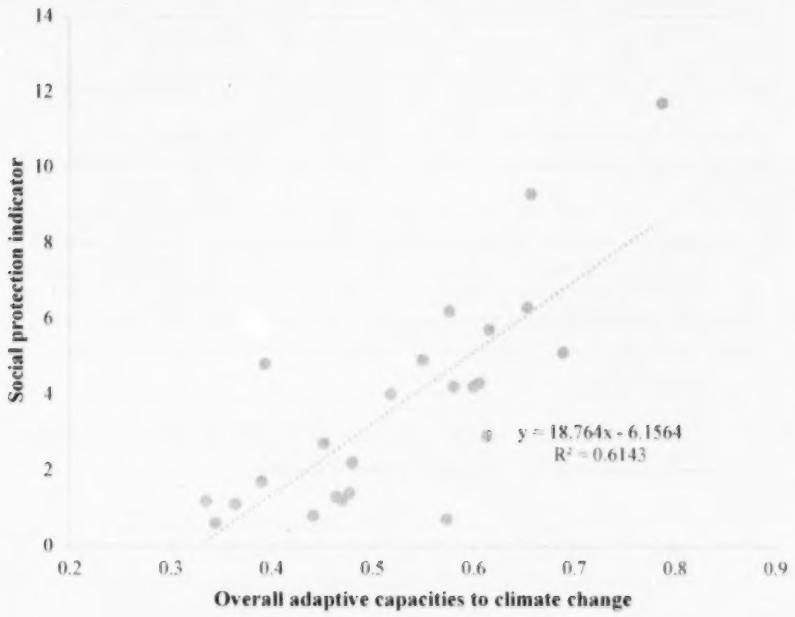
Note: AFG, Afghanistan; ARM, Armenia; AUS, Australia; AZE, Azerbaijan; BGD, Bangladesh; BRN, Brunei Darussalam; BTN, Bhutan; CHN, China; FJI, Fiji; GEO, Georgia; IDN, Indonesia; IND, India; IRN, Iran (Islamic Republic of); JPN, Japan; KAZ, Kazakhstan; KGZ, Kyrgyzstan; KHM, Cambodia; KOR, Republic of Korea; LAO, Lao People's Democratic Republic; LKA, Sri Lanka; MDV, Maldives; MMR, Myanmar; MNG, Mongolia; MYS, Malaysia; NPL, Nepal; NZL, New Zealand; PAK, Pakistan; PHL, Philippines; PNG, Papua New Guinea; RUS, Russian Federation; SGP, Singapore; SLB, Solomon Islands; THA, Thailand; TJK, Tajikistan; TKM, Turkmenistan; TLS, Timor-Leste; TON, Tonga; TUR, Turkey; UZB, Uzbekistan; VNM, Viet Nam; VUT, Vanuatu; and WSM, Samoa.

28. Targeted social protection policies can be a useful tool for Governments to strengthen the adaptive capacity of the most vulnerable groups. Strengthening resilience capacities requires a broad spectrum of institutional capacities and systems characteristics. To illustrate this point, figure II shows the strong correlation between the social protection index level in countries and their overall adaptive capacity to climate change risks. For example, in sectors such as agriculture, which is affected by risks arising from climate change and environmental degradation, skill development programmes for farmers to improve their adaptation capacity could be crucial. In Tajikistan, training activities for farmers on climate-resilient agro-biodiversity-friendly practices, financial management and the provision of microcredit was found to increase

their adaptive capacity.[16] The application of appropriate technologies to promote water conservation in China[17] and the promotion of new water management techniques in the Islamic Republic of Iran[18] were also found to strengthen adaptive capacity, especially in the agricultural sector. Further, the implementation of national adaptation plans and plans of action is a way to enhance the adaptive capacity of critical sectors and systems against the risk of climate change. Finally, income source diversification by promoting off-farm activities has enhanced the adaptive capacity of communities prone to flooding in Bangladesh.[19]

Figure II

Level of adaptive capacities to climate change and availability of social protection among States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific



Source: ESCAP calculations based on data from the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index dataset, 2016, available from https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/; and ADB, *The Social Protection Indicator: Assessing Results for Asia* (Manila, 2016).

[16] Lisa Dougherty-Choux and others, *Adapting from the Ground Up: Enabling Small Businesses in Developing Countries to Adapt to Climate Change* (Washington, D.C., World Resources Institute, 2015).

[17] United Nations Environment Programme, "Discussion document for agenda item 8 (a) Theme: 'Towards a pollution-free planet', Regional input to outcomes of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly" document UNEP/APEnvForum(2)/2). Available from www.apministerialenv.org/document/UNEP_2E.pdf.

[18] UNDP, *Biodiversity for Sustainable Development: Delivering Results for Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok, 2014).

[19] Practical Action-Bangladesh, *Good Practices for Community Resilience* (Dhaka, 2009).

4. Transformative capacity

29. Transformative capacity refers to the ability to make intentional changes to systems responsible for the creation of risk, vulnerability and inequality. Transformative capacity enables action to break away from the status quo when needed. It determines the ability to identify opportunities for transformation when there is a crisis or elevated stress and to create new visions and means of empowerment for stakeholders.

30. During the consultations, different actions to build transformative capacity were identified. These included, in North-East Asia, the promotion of lifestyle changes at the individual level and institutional reforms, including strengthening education systems to more effectively harness technologies and the development of new forms of insurance systems to meet the changing nature of risks. In the Pacific, facilitating behavioural change through promotion and advertising campaigns was identified as key in building transformative capacity to deal with non-communicable diseases. The South-East Asia consultation highlighted opportunities through the development of national vision documents for economic transformation, new systems and mechanisms to deal with climate change, awareness campaigns and improved cross-border collaboration between countries to control issues such as haze.

31. Building transformative capacity was recognized as strategic; however, practical ways to strengthen transformative capacity are not always obvious. For example, even though Japan recognized its aging phenomenon as early as the 1970s, the participants in the subregional consultation mentioned that their society lacked the transformation capacity to create systemic changes that could adequately address the challenges of aging. In section V, some practical approaches are identified.

IV. An application of the analytical framework: the case of the food system in Asia and the Pacific

32. In this section the analytical framework introduced in the previous section is applied to the specific case of food systems in the region to help to underscore its usefulness for policymakers. Building resilience in the region's food systems will be critical to address the increasing demand for food, the increasing climate-induced disasters and the increasing variability in weather patterns, all of which undermine production. The analysis starts with a description of vulnerabilities in food systems, with particular attention to trade systems as an important component of food systems, and highlights links to children's development. This approach demonstrates the interlinkages between components of human systems and how important it is to establish a comprehensive framework to assess and improve capacities for resilience.

A. What are the drivers of risks of the regional food systems?

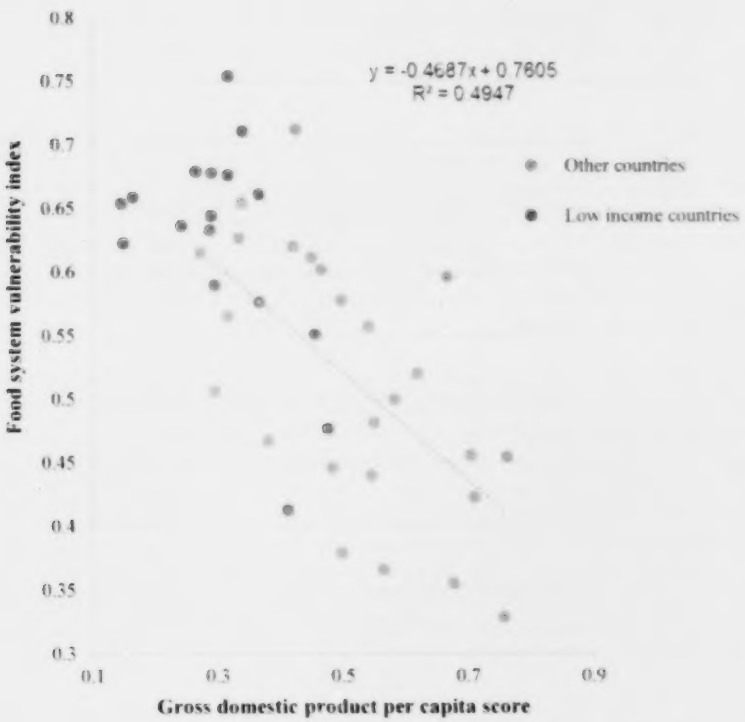
33. Food systems in the majority of the region's low income countries are increasingly vulnerable to climate change, as well as to risks resulting from demographic changes. Climate change is expected to make production more difficult and more expensive in the region; for example, the rice yield in several South-East Asian countries could decline by up to 50 per cent by 2100.[20] Figure III plots the measure of vulnerability of food systems of ESCAP

[20] ADB, *A Region at Risk: The Human Dimensions of Climate Change in Asia and the Pacific* (Manila, 2017).

member States to climate change and GDP per capita to show that countries that are least ready to face risks economically also have food systems that are most vulnerable to climate change.[21]

Figure III

Food system vulnerability index and gross domestic product scores among States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2016



Source: ESCAP calculations based on data from the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index dataset, 2016. Available from https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/.

Note: The food system vulnerability index is from 0 to 1. The higher the value, the greater the vulnerability of a country's food system to emerging risks of climate change and population growth. Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita scores also range from 0 to 1, with the score increasing as GDP per capita increases.

[21] The vulnerability of food systems to climate change encompasses aspects such as projected change in crop yield due to climate change, demographic changes (projected population trends) and sensitivity factors such as food import dependence of countries. For full details of all six components of the vulnerability index of food systems see "University of Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index: country index technical report" (South Bend, Indiana, 2015). Available from https://gain.nd.edu/assets/254377/nd_gain_technical_document_2015.pdf.

B. How do these drivers impact the food system and who are most vulnerable?

34. Trade systems are integral to regional food systems. Against the backdrop of the increasing vulnerability of food systems described above, the secretariat's analysis of trade systems relating to staple food commodities in the region shows that the resilience of these systems is in decline. With countries' increased dependency on a limited number of suppliers,[22] vulnerability to supply disruptions increases and there are fewer options to quickly ensure an adequate supply of food when disruptions in trade, whether due to political factors, natural disasters, transport linkage failures or other factors, occur.

35. ESCAP analysed the resilience of 74 staple food commodity trade networks in the region for the period 1986 to 2015[23] and found that 73 per cent of these networks show signs of reducing redundancy (which measures the degree of freedom or diversity of pathways within any network). Reducing redundancy (as in the case of increasingly "efficient" trade networks) is a sign of the weakening resilience of these networks. This means that for 73 per cent of these commodities, countries are becoming more reliant on fewer countries for their food imports.[24]

36. The combination of increasing vulnerability and reduced resilience of food systems points to an increasing risk of food supply disruptions, including through food price fluctuations. This has important implications for the region, where experience has shown that food price fluctuations can have devastating long-term implications for people's livelihoods. For example, the food price shock of 2007–2008 increased the depth of poverty in rural areas and led to higher malnutrition.[25] A repetition of these episodes can seriously undermine the ability of the region to meet several targets of the 2030 Agenda. For example, a direct impact of climate change and resulting food shortages would be an increase in the number of malnourished children in South Asia alone by almost 7 million.[20]

37. The most significant implication of rising food prices is the likely disproportionate impact on specific groups, such as children and the rural poor, with a resulting increase in development divides. Vulnerable groups of people and communities should be identified early on, and it is vital that they are placed at the core of society's efforts to strengthen resilience to achieve the central aspiration of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind.

---

[22] William D. Presutti, Jr., "The single source issue: U.S. and Japanese sourcing strategies", *International Journal of Purchasing and Materials Management*, vol. 28, No. 1 (December 1992), pp. 2–9.

[23] Ali Kharrazi, "Examining the resilience of agricultural and food commodity trade networks in the Asia and Pacific region" (forthcoming).

[24] One of the potential driving factors of this phenomenon in the region is preferential trade agreements. The Asia-Pacific region has been a major contributor to the growth of these agreements. Currently, the region has 167 preferential trade agreements: 63 per cent of the global total. The growth of these agreements increases the drive towards further regional trade liberalization. ESCAP analyses shows that there is a close association between the proliferation of these agreements and the reduction of resilience of food trade networks.

[25] Julia Compton, Steve Wiggins and Sharada Keats, *Impact of the Global Food Crisis on the Poor: What is the Evidence?* (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2010). Available from www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6371.pdf.

C. How can resilience capacities be strengthened to address emerging risks to food systems?

38. The above analysis is helpful for deriving the specific policy responses required to build resilience of food systems in the region. In terms of anticipatory capacity, the region needs to closely monitor the emerging threat of climate change with regard to its key food production areas. It is important to convey early on any climate anomalies, including variation in weather patterns, that can undermine the production potential of the main agriculture centres of the region. In terms of absorptive capacity, community-level or national-level food stocks can be built to tide over unexpected food shortages. In terms of adaptive capacity, adaptation plans and policies need to be drafted to climate proof the dominant food production areas that are most vulnerable to climate change.

39. In terms of transformative capacity, one important takeaway from the earlier analysis is that the trade networks that support the provision of food in the region are showing signs of weakening resilience. There needs to be a paradigm shift in policymaking with regard to trade in the region so that building the overall resilience of critical commodity trade networks becomes an ex-ante priority of policymakers. This would require fundamental shifts in policymaking and how preferential trade agreements are made by countries. For example, incentives could be integrated within regional trade and investment agreements that would encourage the transfer of agricultural technology and the production and trade of climate-resilient food crops. Other incentives could promote agricultural investments in regions that are less vulnerable to climate change. This would improve the overall resilience of food systems in the region but realizing these transformations, especially at the regional level, involving multiple stakeholders, is very challenging. The next section deals with certain specific ways to strengthen the transformative capacity of societies to address some of these challenges.

V. Conclusion: addressing the challenges to strengthening transformative capacity of societies

40. The discussions held across the region in preparation for the fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development underlined that while all four resilience capacities were important for dealing with the risks identified, societies found building transformative capacities and instituting transformations a major challenge. Transformation is a long-term, dynamic, whole-of-society process that dramatically improves the outcomes of complex long-term trends. Considering the gaps, existing policy approaches and institutional mandates, and the perspectives shared at the subregional consultations, five ways to strengthen the transformative capacities of societies are identified in this section.

41. First, monitoring mechanisms, to identify a coming crisis or an opportunity for transformation, are critical; this includes the establishment of regular monitoring systems, backed by appropriate analytical capacity, and forums for social dialogue. For example, several Governments in the region have established offices of strategic foresight to identify emerging risks and opportunities and initiate systemic transformations.[26] Such offices should be

[26] UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, *Foresight as a Strategic Long-Term Planning Tool for Developing Countries* (Singapore 2014). Available from www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GPCSE_Foresight.pdf?download.

empowered and given clear mandates to influence the national agenda-setting process. Though establishing monitoring mechanisms also strengthens anticipatory capacity, the level of monitoring required to strengthen transformative capacity is much deeper.

42. Second, institutional mandates to facilitate collective learning processes, systems thinking approaches, and the role of learning in policymaking should be strengthened. Transformative capacity emphasizes collective learning and knowledge generation, as well as equitable access to information as a means of defining opportunities for change and defining solutions; learning that leads to transformation takes a much deeper form, moving beyond the incremental improvement of action strategies that do not question underlying assumptions.[27] In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, researchers argued that when it comes to the measurement of economic performance and social progress, institutions are still rigid and focus on statistics and general criteria such as growth and GDP without questioning the basic assumptions that led to the crisis in the first place.[28]

43. Dealing with institutional learning rigidity is a precondition for wider social change, and it requires informal settings connected to formal processes.[27] Learning that supports transformation will also require knowledge systems that are accessible and better able to deal with complexity, integration and foresight. This will include "societal agenda setting, collective problem framing, a plurality of perspectives, integrative research processes, new norms for handling dissent and controversy, better treatment of uncertainty and of diversity of values, extended peer review, broader and more transparent metrics for evaluation, effective dialogue processes, and stakeholder participation".[29] Informal and formal sector exchanges can also provide opportunities for learning. Information and communications technology enhances access to knowledge and the ability to source knowledge from diverse sources, including traditional sources.

44. Transformative capacity can be strengthened by mechanisms to increase the diversity of paths for accessing or mobilizing resources and capital by those who most need them. Financing, in particular through a focus on impactful investment, will be needed, together with enhanced partnerships and collaboration. Governments' increased capacity to facilitate collaboration, and the right kinds of partnerships, is critical. Several lessons can be learned from

---

[27] Claudia Pahl-Wostl, "A conceptual framework for analysing adaptive capacity and multi-level learning processes in resource governance regimes", *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 19, No. 3 (August 2009), pp. 354–365.

[28] "The Commission's aim has been to identify the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress and to assess the feasibility of alternative measurement tools". See Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, "Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress" (accessed 31 January 2018). Available from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/118025/118123/Fitoussi+Commission+report. Since then, multilateral agencies have developed new products that endorse the need for new indicators that measure well-being. See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "How's life? 2017: measuring well-being – the 60-second guide", available from www.oecd.org/std/Hows-Life-2017-60-second-guide.pdf; and John Helliwell, Richard Layard, and Jeffrey Sachs, eds., *World Happiness Report, 2017* (New York, Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2017), available from http://worldhappiness.report/ed/2017/.

[29] Sarah Cornell and others, "Opening up knowledge systems for better responses to global environmental change", *Environment Science and Policy*, vol. 28 (April 2013). Available from www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1462901112002110.

the distinct characteristics of successful partnerships in the agricultural value chain that have transformed livelihood and development opportunities for rural communities.

45. The promotion of innovation, especially economic and social innovation, is an important building block of efforts to strengthen transformative capacity. Given the fundamental changes observed in the Asia-Pacific region, innovative solutions are needed, ones that take into account the complexity of the challenges and that allow human systems to learn, adapt and transform. And perhaps more importantly, the capacity of the Asia-Pacific region needs to be built so that such innovative solutions can be found repeatedly. Therefore, part of building transformative capacity is strengthening a culture of innovation. Social innovation can provide locally relevant solutions to different development challenges. The private sector role in promoting innovation is critical.

46. Finally, policymakers need to expand the space for engagement as a basis for strengthening inherent transformative capacity. Observers in the Republic of Korea in the wake of the 1997 financial crisis referred to the spirit of the times, the zeal for reform, national unity and the role of dialogue and participatory democracy "as an equal, indispensable companion to durable economic reform". Transformation requires shared awareness and understanding, alliances between different kinds of stakeholders and different institutions. It also requires supportive governance structures to strengthen social buy-in, backed by more accountability and responsibility for all actors.

47. These policy and institutional interventions also apply at the subregional and regional levels. At those levels, resilience thinking can support transformation by enabling reflection on long-term trends and defining the need for collective action in forums such as the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. Considering the commonalities in risk profiles identified across subregions, there is considerable scope for the establishment of regional monitoring mechanisms. Strengthening partnerships and collaboration with countries, in particular countries with special needs, needs to go beyond trade relationships and economic access; it requires greater focus on capacity-building and institution-building to strengthen governance to better mobilize societal resources for inclusive benefit. And finally, investments are needed to strengthen regional and subregional mechanisms for learning and the necessary supportive knowledge systems.

VI. Matters calling for the attention of the fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

48. Member States and other stakeholders are invited to review the present document with a view to:

(a) Sharing national perspectives on the issues raised and best practice responses to the challenges identified. Member States and other stakeholders are invited to focus attention on the priority thematic areas of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific, with respect to the resilience of poor and vulnerable groups, the agricultural sector, infrastructure development, cities and human settlements, climate-related hazards and natural disasters, and marine and coastal ecosystems;

(b) Discussing opportunities for regional cooperation to support national efforts towards transformations for sustainable and resilient societies.

United Nations ESCAP/RFSD/2018/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 February 2018

Original: English

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Bangkok, 28–30 March 2018
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Strengthening the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region

Synthesis report on the voluntary national reviews submitted by Asia-Pacific countries at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017

Note by the secretariat**

Summary

The present document contains a summary of the main messages of the voluntary national reviews submitted by countries from the Asia-Pacific region in 2017 and collected in the section on the high-level political forum on sustainable development of the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform website. This synthesis also covers the 2016 voluntary national review reports from the region. General characteristics and commonalities within the region with respect to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are highlighted and an outline is given of policy measures and institutional mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans and strategies, follow-up and review processes and means of implementation. Also addressed in the document are the challenges that the submitting countries of the 2017 voluntary national reviews face in several areas of the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda, such as data collection and analysis and financing mechanisms, and the response of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to these challenges.

I. Introduction

1. Follow-up and review are critical for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The roles, importance and guiding principles of follow-up and review are clearly highlighted in the 2030 Agenda, which provide for a three-tiered follow-up and review process at the national, regional and global levels.

* ESCAP/RFSD/2018/L.1.

** The present document was submitted late owing to the need to incorporate additional inputs.

Please recycle

2. In contributing to the regional follow-up and review, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) measured progress on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region through a baseline report.[1] In the report, objective and feasible target values for the region are estimated using available data to establish a baseline and assess the gaps that need to be closed if the Sustainable Development Goals are to be achieved by 2030.[2] For over one third of the Goals, existing data show a slow or stagnating progress since 2000. For another third, the data suggest that the region is moving in the wrong direction, and only for one third is the region on the right path to achieving the set Goals by 2030.

3. The Asia-Pacific region has made significant progress in one third of the Goal areas. In respect to Goal 1 (No poverty), between the periods 2000–2004 and 2010–2013, the proportion of the population living in poverty decreased from 29.7 to 10.3 per cent. For Goal 4 (Quality education), in 2014 primary net enrolment was more than 90 per cent, with the fastest observable progress in South and South-West Asia, where between 1999 and 2000 primary net enrolment increased from 75 to 90 per cent. As regards Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth), Asia and the Pacific has outpaced the world as a whole in terms of economic productivity. In respect to Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), between 2000 and 2015, manufacturing as a proportion of value added grew by 30 per cent in the Asia-Pacific region, compared with only 10 per cent for the world as a whole. For Goal 14 (Life below water), between 2000 and 2016, on average across the region the proportion of the total territorial waters under protection increased from approximately 8 to 31 per cent at the country level.

4. Progress has been slow or even stagnant since 2000 with respect to Goal 2 (Zero hunger), as reflected by the fact that, in 2015, of the world's 795 million undernourished people, nearly 500 million lived in the Asia-Pacific region. Regarding Goal 3 (Good health and well-being), in 2015, 86,000 women in the region died from pregnancy- and birth-related causes (28 per cent of the global total). As regards Goal 5 (Gender equality), in 2015, only approximately 18 per cent of seats in national parliaments in Asia-Pacific countries were held by women. Data on Goal 6 (Clean water and sanitation) are a worrying cause of concern as, for example, 59 per cent of people in South and South-West Asia are still exposed to poor sanitation. Assessment of progress on Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy) shows that over 400 million people in the Asia-Pacific region still have no access to electricity. In respect to Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions), between 2003 and 2014, the prison population in Asia and the Pacific grew from 3.2 million to 3.4 million.

5. For several Goals, the scenario has worsened over the past 15 years. This is true especially for the Goals that were not addressed by the Millennium Development Goals. Stronger efforts need to be pursued with respect to Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduced inequalities). Inequality has increased in seven countries, affecting 2.75 billion people, and decreased in 14 countries, affecting 1 billion people. Regarding Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), over the period 2008–2013, of the 24 Asia-Pacific countries that had data on the concentration of dangerous fine particulate matter, of

[1] *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2016: SDG Baseline Report* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.II.F.1).

[2] The analysis uses national values for 30 per cent of the proposed global Sustainable Development Goal indicators to assess regional achievements for each Goal in the baseline year 2015. It applies a subset of these indicators to illustrate the progress made since 2000 and progress needed to meet the 2030 targets.

2.5 micrometres in diameter or less, only Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Japan, Maldives and New Zealand were under the level of 10 micrograms per cubic metre of air that is recommended by the World Health Organization. Data relating to Goal 12 (Responsible consumption and production) indicate unsustainability of current practices: between 2005 and 2015, the total material footprint more than doubled, from 27 billion to 46 billion tons. In respect to Goal 15 (Life on land), between 2000 to 2016, 48 out of 57 Asia-Pacific countries experienced a loss in biodiversity.

6. As part of the follow-up and review mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda, member States are encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress (voluntary national reviews) at the national and subnational levels – the critical levels for implementation, where governments are accountable to their citizens – guided by the principles defined in the 2030 Agenda.[3] These principles indicate that the follow-up and review processes should be voluntary and country-led; track progress in implementing the universal Goals and targets, including the means of implementation, in all countries in a manner which respects their universal, integrated and interrelated nature; be inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people; and be people-centred and gender-sensitive and respect human rights.

7. At the country level, the major value added by these national reports is the opportunity to unite the main stakeholders towards a single ambitious project and to take stock of the different initiatives to plan, implement and follow up on the Sustainable Development Goals.

8. At the global level, through the presentation of the voluntary national reviews, the countries have the opportunity to share success stories, best practices and challenges with peers and collect key innovative solutions to support the national follow-up and review process and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

9. Also at the global level, the high-level political forum on sustainable development is the central follow-up and review platform tasked with assessing progress, achievements and challenges faced by the member States that use the platform to present their voluntary national reviews. The report of the Secretary-General on critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level (A/70/684) included in its annex a proposed set of voluntary common reporting guidelines, which contained suggested components to help countries to frame the preparations for voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum. These guidelines are useful to promote consistency and comparability between voluntary national reviews and from one year to the next. The regular reviews by the high-level political forum also provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

10. At the regional level, the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development is the pre-eminent platform for the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific region. It serves as a regional preparatory meeting for the high-level political forum and continues to strengthen support for national and global implementation and reporting efforts. This regional platform provides opportunities for peer learning and for cooperation among countries on a range

[3] See General Assembly resolution 70/1.

of issues related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda.

11. Furthermore, the Commission, in its resolution 72/6 on committing to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific, requested the Executive Secretary to, among others, promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and provide annual updates and recommendations to member States, and strengthen support to member States in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda in an integrated approach. In its resolution 73/1 on a conference structure of the Commission aligned with the 2030 Agenda, the Commission decided that the terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development would include supporting the follow-up to and review of progress on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level by supporting the presentation of voluntary national reviews.

12. Building upon this regional architecture, the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development provides a platform for member countries that have or will be presenting voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum to share their experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.

13. In 2016, the Governments of the first batch of countries delivered reports on their voluntary national reviews, five of which were from the Asia-Pacific region (China, Georgia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Samoa). These initial voluntary national review reports highlighted the need for financial and technical assistance to improve statistical systems and for regional support to facilitate technology transfer, knowledge-sharing – in particular in mobilizing the private sector – and sustained cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and recalled the importance of civil society in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

14. At the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development that was held in New York from 10 to 19 July 2017, addressing the theme "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", the Governments of 43 countries presented voluntary national reviews.[4] From the Asia-Pacific region, 12 member States volunteered to report, representing the four main Asian subregions: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran,[5] Maldives and Nepal (South and South-West Asia); Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand (South-East Asia); Japan (East and North-East Asia); and Azerbaijan and Tajikistan (North and Central Asia). Together, they represent almost 50 per cent of the Asia-Pacific region's population and one third of its total gross domestic product.

15. The present document contains a summary of the main messages of the reports submitted by the Governments of the Asia-Pacific countries participating in voluntary national reviews in 2017 and collected in the section on the high-level political forum of the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform website.[6] General characteristics and commonalities within the region

[4] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2017.

[5] The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran submitted a main message, but not a full report.

[6] The reports are available online. For more information, see https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/inputs/ and https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf.

with respect to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are highlighted in the synthesis and an outline is given of policy measures and institutional mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans and strategies, follow-up and review processes and means of implementation. Also summarized in the document are the challenges that the countries presented in their voluntary national reviews in several areas of the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda, such as data collection and analysis and financing mechanisms.

16. Peer support at the regional level to share experiences and lessons learned with neighbouring countries can help member States overcome the challenges described above. In this regard, the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development supports countries in: (a) sharing progress with respect to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; (b) sharing completed, ongoing or planned national-level follow-up and review; (c) discussing any clarifications that countries may provide on the necessary steps to prepare a voluntary national review, including sharing understanding on the format and process; (d) identifying regional commonalities and lessons learned from follow-up and review and voluntary national review preparations undertaken so far; (e) learning about the available data and technical support required to assess progress with respect to the implementation of the Goals; and (f) learning how to undertake meaningful stakeholder engagement in the follow-up and review process.

II. Voluntary national reviews in 2017: processes for the implementation, follow-up to and review of the Sustainable Development Goals

A. Institutional mainstreaming and national mechanisms

17. The Governments of many reporting countries in the region have mainstreamed the Sustainable Development Goals into their national planning: some have designated focal points for implementation of the Goals; some have revised and aligned their national development plans to support the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda, or are in the process of doing so; and some have already aligned the Goals and their targets and related indicators with their national plans and objectives.

18. It can be noted that the Governments of reporting countries from Asia and the Pacific have been mainstreaming the Goals into their national planning in similar ways.

19. The Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan has been designated as focal point for implementation of the Goals. Moreover, the nationalization process is happening through a concerted action of various stakeholders and under the coordination of the High Council of Ministers. The nationalized targets and indicators for the Goals have been allocated to eight different budgetary sectors, which has required the Ministry of Economy to work closely with the line ministries accountable for each budget. To ensure smooth coordination among different institutions, the National Coordination Commission was appointed superintendent body, providing a platform for inclusive and sustained cross-sectoral engagement. However, institutional capacity is still insufficient in some areas, as public security, and social and economic constraints affect the political environment and jeopardize the political will to attain the Goals.

20. In Nepal, three high-level committees comprising representatives from both the private and the public sector, along with civil society organizations, have been formed to support implementation of the Goals in national policymaking. Since the new Constitution was approved in 2015, the Government has embarked on a new federal governance structure that encourages the mainstreaming of the Goals into provincial- and local-level budgeting and planning.

21. The Government of Azerbaijan will revise all governmental development plans and align them to support the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda into national planning. The National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development has been established to ensure inclusive stakeholder participation; mainstream the Goals and translate the respective targets and indicators into the national context; identify national priorities along with gaps and opportunities for sustainable development; develop inclusive and rights-based national strategies and policies; ensure horizontal policy coherence; and harmonize and coordinate reporting and review frameworks. The National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development is supported by four thematic working groups that cover economic growth, environmental issues and monitoring and evaluation, and has the power to establish an additional four thematic working groups.

22. In Bangladesh, the 2030 Agenda has been integrated into national planning in the seventh five-year plan, which runs from 2016 to 2020. Responsibilities and ownership of 2030 Agenda have been clearly defined at the ministerial level to ensure Goal policy implementation. To enhance synergies and formulate effective action plans, lead, co-lead and associate ministries have been mapped out against each Goal target and the Annual Performance Agreement was introduced as a results-based performance management system, to assess the assimilation of the Goal targets into the programmes and projects delivered. The Government has prepared an action plan to achieve the Goals in line with the seventh five-year plan, to ensure alignment with the Goal targets. In addition, the Sustainable Development Goal Implementation and Monitoring Committee has already been created at the Prime Minister's Office level to facilitate Goal coordination and implementation.

23. The Government of Thailand has assigned responsibility for the Goals to the National Committee for Sustainable Development, which includes a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including from civil society and academia, in the consultation. The "sufficient economy" principles that constitute the guiding development framework in Thailand have been integrated with the Goals into the 20-Year National Strategy Framework and the Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017–2021), to ensure budgeting and priority alignment throughout all governmental bodies and agencies.

24. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the National Committee for Sustainable Development was elected as focal point for Goal policy coordination, implementation and reporting, and has been responsible for the stakeholder consultation for the voluntary national review reporting process. To this end, the National Five-year Development Plan provides for an interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism to mainstream the Goals into national planning. The Islamic Republic of Iran is also currently developing a national sustainable development strategy to promote integration of the Goals into national development priorities, focusing chiefly on water, environmental conservation, poverty eradication, equal opportunities and job creation.

25. In Indonesia, the Long-Term Development Plan, which spans from 2005 to 2025, already includes most of the Sustainable Development Goals, and most of the Goal targets and related indicators are already aligned with the national objectives. In addition, a National Sustainable Development Goal Coordination Team, supported by the Sustainable Development Goal Secretariat, has been established to ensure horizontal as well as vertical coordination and comprehensive stakeholder participation. In India, the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) – the main governmental policy think tank, chaired by the Prime Minister – is leading implementation of the Goals. Following a principle of "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas" ("Collective Effort, Inclusive Growth"), it advocates active participation from all Indian states in developing road maps for effective and long-lasting enforcement of the sustainable development agenda. Indicators for tracking the Goals have also been developed in consultation with the Ministry of Statistics. Similarly, Malaysia has initiated the development of a national Sustainable Development Goal road map to maintain a holistic view of the Goals, which are included into the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016–2020).

26. Japan established the Sustainable Development Goals Promotion Headquarters in 2016, headed by the Prime Minister, which is a new governing body responsible for leading the process of achieving the Goals and enhancing cooperation among all ministries and governmental agencies. The Cabinet adopted the Sustainable Development Goal Implementation Guiding Principles, which represents the country's national strategy for achieving the Goals, identifying eight main priorities for the country: capacity-building and empowerment, healthy living, innovation and inclusive growth, resilience, energy security, environmental conservation, national security, and means of implementation.

27. The Government of Tajikistan, in its National Development Strategy (2030) and Midterm Development Programme (2016–2020) has identified four main areas and related Sustainable Development Goals – namely energy security (Goal 7), communications infrastructure (Goal 9), food security (Goals 1 and 2) and green growth (Goal 8) – that will be used to prepare the ground for more comprehensive and substantive achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Localization of the Goals is a priority, as well as data disaggregation, to meet the demands of vulnerable groups. Goal indicators at the country level will be introduced to better monitor progress.

28. In Maldives, it is the National Ministerial Coordination Committee, constituted of cabinet ministers, with the support of the Technical Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, that embodies a guiding role and provides political support towards implementation of the Goals. While different agencies or institutions as well civil society organizations are all accountable for achieving the Goals, the overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the process lies within the Sustainable Development Goals Division at the Ministry of Environment and Energy, which promotes policy integration and broad stakeholder consultation. The Government of Maldives strongly believes that continued political support and broad-base participation are at the core of the 2030 Agenda.

B. Creating ownership

29. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are described as key to mobilizing and sharing knowledge, technological expertise and financial resources for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Countries of the Asia-Pacific region have been actively raising awareness on the review of the Sustainable Development Goals and the voluntary reporting at the high-level political forum through the organization of workshops, symposiums, conferences and forums, as is the case in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Japan and Thailand.

30. Wider participation of stakeholders, compared to the experience with the Millennium Development Goals, has been encouraged across the region. Some countries have put special emphasis on the involvement of minority groups, such as women, youth, refugees and internally displaced persons. However, coordination and alignment of interests among relevant partners and institutions is crucial.

31. The Government of Afghanistan has adopted an inclusive approach, conducting around 50 workshops with national and international stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, youth, students, the media and women's groups. Wider participation of stakeholders has been encouraged using the principle of leaving no one behind and through the adoption of a whole-of-society approach – as defined by the Government of Bangladesh in its voluntary national review – which aims at ensuring a wider participation of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the media and civil society organizations in the Goal implementation phase so that the whole society is represented. The Government of Nepal also reports positively on organizing a series of workshops and summits to strengthen partnerships with the private sector, cooperatives, civil society, development partners and the international community to meet the large capacity-building needs.

32. The Government of Azerbaijan is also working towards an inclusive participation level to achieve the Goals. Local mass media and civil society organizations are engaged to secure outreach to all societal segments, and emphasis is placed on the involvement of minority groups such as women, youth, refugees and internally displaced persons. Furthermore, an interactive web platform is being created to ensure a participatory process of consultation on the Goals, as well as for monitoring and reporting mechanisms. In Tajikistan, a series of consultations at the national and regional levels was conducted, with broad participation of stakeholders, such as governmental experts, including sectoral- and local-level specialists, United Nations agencies, parliament members, civil society, academia, entrepreneurs and the media, as well as representatives of development partners. An increased level of participation of civil society is regarded as the way forward in implementing and achieving the Goals at the national and regional levels.

33. The Government of Japan established the Sustainable Development Goal Promotion Round-table Meetings, comprising a wide range of stakeholders. The round-table meetings were held to draft the Sustainable Development Goal Implementation Guiding Principles, as well as to prepare for the voluntary national review. Furthermore, to give more incentives to the private sector to work towards the Goals, the Japan Sustainable Development Goals Award initiative was put forward. At the time of the submission of the voluntary national review report, public awareness on the Goals was still lagging behind in Japan. For this reason, the Education for Sustainable Development programme was launched to involve young people and

encourage learning about the Goals in all settings, including schools, households, workplaces and local communities.

34. Similarly, the Government of Maldives is initiating the work of identifying national priorities for the Goal targets through a process of consultations with implementing agencies, civil society and the private sector. The National Bureau of Statistics is also carrying out a mapping exercise of data gaps in dialogue with broad societal representation. The Government of Maldives also conducted focused awareness sessions, targeting parliamentarians, local councils, members of the judiciary, students and non-governmental organizations.

35. The Government of Thailand reports on a series of stakeholder engagement activities that led the civil society and other entities to propose and make substantive contributions to the 2030 Agenda in accordance with their respective roles and expertise. Global Compact Network Thailand and other private entities are also active in mainstreaming the Goals and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework into business operations.[7] Civil society organizations held their own regional forums on the Goals to present their views, concerns and priorities, and have produced their own voluntary national review report to supplement that of the Government. The Government's report was developed with the guiding concept of learning from the communities.

36. The Government of Indonesia regards broad stakeholder involvement throughout the process – from the planning to the implementation, as well as the monitoring and evaluation phase – as being among its national strengths. For the voluntary national review, for instance, which was conducted in several stages, stakeholders were involved through offline and online public consultations in the development of metadata on the Goal and guidelines for formulating national and subnational action plans. Active multi-stakeholder engagement was encouraged through the establishment of implementing teams and working groups within the Sustainable Development Goals National Coordination Team. A system to ensure transparency and accountability was also established: all the outcomes of the offline consultation were communicated through email, the website of Sustainable Development Goals Indonesia (http://sdgs.bappenas.go.id) and social media. All stakeholders are involved not only in the implementation of the Goals, but also in determining the direction of that implementation.

37. Stakeholders are also involved in the Goal coordinating mechanisms, as in the case of the National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development in Azerbaijan or the National Committee for Sustainable Development in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which coordinated the efforts of the Sustainable Development Steering Council, the parliament, local governments and communities, academia, municipalities, civil society, the private sector and United Nations agencies.

38. Reflecting the country's commitment to the Goal agenda at the highest levels of government, the Indian Parliament organized several forums, including the South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in February 2017 and the Speaker's Research Initiative launched to provide Goals-related insights to Members of Parliament. The

[7] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=428&menu=3170.

forums focused primarily on ways to eradicate poverty, as a prerequisite to sustainable development, and on gender equality, climate change and resource mobilization for the Goals.

C. Integrated reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals

39. Several reporting countries from Asia and the Pacific addressed progress on the cluster of Sustainable Development Goals that were under review at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017, which included Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17. Many of the voluntary national reviews highlighted the interconnected nature of the Goals and the interlinkages between them. Increased efforts to provide capacity-building to policymakers on such interlinkages and integration between Goals were therefore identified as a key enabler in several of the voluntary national reviews.

40. The process of mainstreaming the Goals and aligning them with national priorities has provided the opportunity for reporting countries to identify interlinkages between the Goals and the ways in which these interlinkages can be leveraged to accelerate progress across national planning with respect to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. For instance, in its report, the Government of Nepal emphasizes that the Goals should be prioritized based on their impacts and interlinkages with other Goals. The Government of Japan, in its voluntary national review, affirms that the Goals and related targets are indivisible and should therefore be attained in an integrated manner.

41. The Government of Indonesia emphasizes how improvements in nutrition and food availability (Goal 2) are connected to education (Goal 4), health (Goal 3) and environmental conditions, and stresses the necessity to improve access to education and to clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), reduce malnutrition and famine and ensure that no one is left behind. The report also contains a discussion of how the country needs to focus on achieving progress in the industry, innovation and infrastructure sectors (Goal 9) in tandem with increasing efforts in the sustainable protection and utilization of marine ecosystems as alternative natural resources that are not currently adequately utilized (Goal 14). In order to address these interlinkages, key enabling factors are needed, such as strengthened partnerships in various sectors, better data and increased financing support. Moreover, supplementary efforts need to be focused on providing capacity-building for all actors to implement the Goals in an integrated manner.

42. The Government of India also highlights the interconnections between the different Goals. Rapid growth (Goal 8), which it defines as the key weapon in any country's arsenal to combat poverty, creates well-paid jobs, which place the necessary purchasing power in the hands of households to access food (Goal 2), education (Goal 4) and health (Goal 3) and have direct consequences on poverty eradication (Goal 1). Moreover, generating equal employment opportunities (Goal 5) and ensuring basic access to services such as clean water and sanitation (Goal 6) are also regarded as prerequisites for ending poverty in all its forms (Goal 1).

43. The Government of Maldives has incorporated the Goals into policy documents and action plans with a view to addressing the linkages between the Goals. For instance, the National Food Safety Policy (2017–2026) is in line with Goal 2, targeting the elimination of hunger, achievement of food security and improvement of nutrition, taking into account other Goals related to health,

poverty, gender equality, water and sanitation, responsible production and consumption, and climate change.

44. Ensuring energy security and efficient use of electricity will allow for an integrated approach to the implementation of the Goals in Tajikistan. In the report, energy security is considered instrumental for the elimination of poverty (Goal 1), health care (Goal 3) and changes in hydrological regimes resulting from climate change (Goal 13). At the same time, some of the priorities for long-term development in Tajikistan are those set under Goal 2, including food security, quality of nutrition and development of agriculture. Goal 2 is in turn linked to the accessibility of affordable and reliable energy.

45. The countries covered in the present synthesis report agreed that the 2030 Agenda is universal, holistic and indivisible, and expressed the view that understanding the interlinkages between the various Goals and targets, as well as the ways in which these interlinkages can be leveraged, is a key step towards implementing the 2030 Agenda and accelerating progress across multiple objectives. At the same time, it is clear how challenging this exercise may be with the current lack of capacities, funding and data.

III. Challenges: financing, data and reporting

A. Financing

46. In most cases, satisfactory financing mechanisms still need to be identified and explored. Member States recognize the need to mobilize both internal and external funding for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Even though for some countries national budgets will be the main source of financing for implementation of the Goals, foreign investment and other more innovative ways of financing will still be necessary.

47. The Government of Bangladesh stresses the necessity to find innovative ways of financing the 2030 Agenda, taking into consideration both the private and the public sector, and national as well as international partners. Especially for countries such as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the unstable political situation or external threats to peace and national security pose severe limits to existing financial mechanisms. Notwithstanding, member States recognize the necessity to mobilize both internal and external funding for the achievement of the Goals. The Government of Tajikistan, for instance, recognizes that even though the national budget will be the main source of financing for implementation of the Goals, foreign investments will be necessary.

48. The Government of Malaysia also intends to mobilize national and foreign resources, including of a financial nature, through partnerships and international cooperation. Mechanisms like public-private partnerships, crowdfunding, philanthropy or corporate social responsibility programmes are being contemplated as viable sources of liquidity.

49. The Government of Indonesia is similarly scrutinizing alternative ways of financing implementation of the Goals, in addition to working towards strengthening cooperation between Governments, financial institutions and the private sector. For instance, the Government has finalized guidelines for enhancing and encouraging green financing and green banking systems. The Financial Services Authority carries the responsibility to support sustainable financing methods. Alternative financing methods, like philanthropy and business or religious social funds, are also being considered. The Government

of Nepal has assigned codes relating to the Goals for all national programmes to ensure adequate finance mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

B. Data and reporting

50. Data availability and access to reliable and scientifically sound data is considered a major barrier by almost all reporting countries. Coherent and holistic mechanisms for regular data collection are critical factors that can influence the quality of the data collected. This is also linked to the availability of funds, internal capacity and other resources to overcome the lack of data. On the one hand, data collection, analysis and dissemination represent a hurdle to the implementation of the Goals; on the other, the Goals provide an opportunity for cooperation in data development in itself.

51. The Government of Maldives pinpoints lack of training and technical expertise for data collection and management as well as inadequacy of funding for the data collection process as major challenges to implementation of the Goals. The Government of Nepal also indicates a weak statistical database and the lack of availability of data disaggregation as factors that risk hindering the monitoring process, which is also affected by the lack of a quantitative baseline for many Goals and their indicators.

52. Data disaggregation is also posing challenges in Indonesia, where full responsibility for data collection and accountability lies with Statistics Indonesia. The Government of Indonesia has already developed 87 out of the total 241 global indicators, as well as 234 proxy indicators to ensure alignment with national priorities. Nevertheless, several disaggregated data indicators are still lagging behind.

53. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has given the Statistical Centre of Iran a special mandate to ensure the adequacy of data collection. However, owing to inconsistencies among Goal indicators and the current national monitoring and evaluation frameworks, the collection of data has been challenging. The Government of Azerbaijan has appointed its State Statistical Committee as the main authority for measuring the national progress with respect to achievement of the Goals, but difficulties in aligning the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets and indicators to national priorities have also been encountered. Harmonization of Goal indicators is identified as a further issue that needs to be addressed with urgency. A system of Goal indicators for monitoring and reporting that can be easily and smoothly translated into national priorities is regarded as a valuable solution.

54. The Government of Bangladesh reports full data availability for 70 indicators and partial availability for another 108; a gap remains for the remaining 63 indicators. Collaboration at the bilateral, regional and global levels is regarded as a way forward to bridge the data availability gap and share best practices. The Government of Maldives also indicates improved intergovernmental cooperation as a way forward with respect to data accessibility and integration, and the Government of Tajikistan stresses the importance of cross-sectoral and transboundary coordination mechanisms to ensure the adequacy of data.

IV. Commission support to voluntary national review countries

55. The present document contains a description of how addressing the 2030 Agenda in an integrated and inclusive manner can be a demanding task. It is emphasized that, along with the delivery challenges towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, attention also needs to be paid to the means of implementation. At the same time, a description is given of how the voluntary national review process provides an opportunity for reporting countries to identify priority actions areas as well as areas of early progress in implementation of the Goals. Asia-Pacific reporting countries have applied different strategies and analytical frameworks to identify domestic priorities and goals and translate them into national policies.

56. Regional follow-up and review can provide a natural nexus between the national and the global levels, by supporting constraints and challenges in the review architecture at the national level. Regional follow-up and review provides a congenial space for discussion, fosters regional collaboration, can address cross-boundary issues (including targets and Goals that require transboundary approaches) and supports peer learning and capacity-building.

57. Follow-up and review at the national level can be supported through technical assistance at the regional level to endow member States with enhanced capacity to implement, monitor and follow up on the Goals. The regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific provides a framework for such assistance as it focuses on a set of priority areas that support the effective pursuit of sustainable development by member States.[8]

58. The rapid response facility established by ESCAP provides quick and effective responses to countries in respect of different thematic areas and priority issues of the regional road map. In 2017, missions related to the rapid response facility were strategically deployed to countries that have committed to delivering their voluntary national review reports in 2018.

59. Through the rapid response facility, ESCAP is supporting countries with their voluntary national reviews by identifying and addressing gaps in Goal data and statistics (including visualization), and supporting integrated systems analysis to help understand interlinkages between the Goals and identify policy priorities, among others. Recognizing that data and reporting are critical for effective implementation of the Goals, ESCAP is supporting countries in addressing the need for broader and more detailed and disaggregated statistics through technical assistance activities to facilitate the production and use of integrated statistics.

60. These ongoing initiatives are strengthened through ESCAP support with respect to stakeholder engagement, which builds the capacity to strengthen existing processes through multi-stakeholder committees, national round tables and the expansion and deepening of engagement in all aspects of implementation, including in the development of voluntary national reviews.

61. Furthermore, ESCAP is working towards increasing awareness of the challenges and opportunities regarding resource mobilization for sustainable development and the need for strengthened efforts in resource mobilization at

[8] Commission resolution 73/9.

all government levels and broad-based cooperation and coordination among countries to work together in addressing common and cross-cutting issues.

V. Matters calling for the attention of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

62. Member States may wish to reflect on the experiences and challenges of countries in developing their voluntary national reviews and provide further guidance with respect to support from the secretariat.

United Nations ESCAP/RFSD/2018/3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
24 January 2018

Original: English

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

Bangkok, 28–30 March 2018
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Strengthening the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region

Progress with regard to the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

Note by the secretariat

Summary

Paragraph 39 of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific indicates that reviews of progress on implementation of the regional road map will take place annually at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, with reference to the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework. The review has been finalized for the period from April 2017 to March 2018 and is presented for the consideration of member States at the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. Highlights of the progress made include the establishment of a rapid response facility to provide quick and effective response to countries in respect of different thematic areas and priority issues of the road map.

I. Introduction

1. Asia and the Pacific was the first region to develop a regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was adopted at the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in March 2017, and endorsed through resolution 73/9 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

2. The objective of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific is to promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development through regional cooperation in a set of priority and thematic areas, identified through consultations with member States.

3. Paragraph 39 of the regional road map indicates that reviews of progress on its implementation will take place annually at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, with reference to the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework. The review has been finalized for the

* ESCAP/RFSD/2018/L.1.

Please recycle

period from April 2017 to March 2018 without creating additional reporting requirements for member States and within existing resources.

II. The foundation for support to member States

4. Following the guidance provided by the regional road map, the priority areas of cooperation identified in the road map are being facilitated through the conference structure of the Commission, existing expertise within the context of the subprogrammes covered by ESCAP, the regional institutes, strengthened institutional partnerships within and outside of the United Nations system, the thematic working groups of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism,[1] and strengthened engagement of the secretariat with various stakeholders.

5. ESCAP established a rapid response facility to provide quick and effective response to countries in support of the different thematic areas and priority issues of the road map. In 2017, missions were deployed to 10 countries in Asia and the Pacific.

6. Missions at the national level are coordinated closely with the United Nations resident coordinators and implemented in the context of the work of the United Nations country team. Technical support is being provided in the areas of integrated analysis, data and statistics, and stakeholder engagement planning, as well as related regional support to address systemic and capacity challenges to institutionalizing effective stakeholder engagement as an important aspect of more effective governance, identified as an issue of concern in the road map.[2]

7. On the invitation by the Resident Coordinator of Bhutan, the secretariat, within the rapid response facility, is advising the United Nations country team and the Government of Bhutan on strengthening national statistical systems for the provision of evidence for decision-making, including for the formulation and monitoring of development policies. The advice is being provided in the context of the development of the United Nations sustainable development policy framework for the period 2019–2023. While the framework has yet to be finalized, deliberations with Government and non-government stakeholders of Bhutan as well as several United Nations agencies has confirmed the necessity of including data for evidence-based policy- and decision-making as a strategic priority area in the framework. Further, support to the country team and the National Statistics Bureau of Bhutan in terms of statistics policy,

[1] The Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism comprises 31 United Nations and affiliated entities, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank. The Mechanism was restructured in line with relevant clusters of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2016, revised terms of reference were adopted and workplans developed. The thematic working groups are on the following areas: (a) statistics; (b) resource-efficient growth; (c) sustainable societies; (d) inclusive development, including poverty eradication; (e) disaster risk reduction and resilience; (f) gender equality and empowerment of women; and (g) education for all.

[2] A partnership with the International Association for Public Participation, a global organization, is being formalized to provide specialized support to member States on engagement for the 2030 Agenda. A workshop held in Bangkok resulted in the identification of the challenges and barriers to multi-stakeholder engagement for the 2030 Agenda and the development of a preliminary set of indicators of quality engagement. This indicator set is being used to support planning and assessment efforts at the national level.

quality assurance and inter-agency coordination has been identified as a key, longer-term engagement pillar for ESCAP within the rapid response facility.

8. The Government of Mongolia, with the support of the rapid response facility, has strengthened its capacity to develop integrated policies with data support through a national consultation process. The rapid diagnostic tool on statistical data was instrumental in the development of the Sustainable Development Goals baseline progress to date and allowed comparison of perception-based rapid impact assessment with data on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The work in Mongolia resulted in enhanced engagement across sectors and the United Nations country team on collaboration for setting priorities, reporting and benchmarking with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals. The immediate output was that this approach was incorporated into the Sustainability Outlook for Mongolia document. Data gaps in environment statistics were also identified and will be addressed in future missions.

9. The Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform of Pakistan has made positive strides in developing an integrated implementation strategy for the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals with technical assistance provided through the ESCAP rapid response facility. ESCAP will provide further capacity development support for integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into national planning and for developing the national environmental accounts that will facilitate strategic prioritization and impact investments. In addition, the work conducted under the rapid response facility resulted in an enrichment of the approach used in the Ministry to assess Sustainable Development Goal priorities and interlinkages as well as to benchmark progress. Data gaps were also identified in environment statistics and these will be addressed in future missions.

10. The Government of Samoa, with the support of the rapid response facility, has reinforced its leadership in the Pacific region in Sustainable Development Goal planning, follow-up and review by integrating the 2030 Agenda into the national development strategy and monitoring and evaluation. With the leadership of the Ministry of Finance, and with support from the rapid response facility, the country is supporting other islands in the Pacific by sharing best practices and tools on sector planning and budgetary processes for the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into national planning.

11. Based on requests made by the Government of Cambodia and the Office of the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, ESCAP provided support in both countries on trade-related issues with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals and graduation from the status of least developed country. ESCAP will develop capacity-building programmes on graduation and on concerns following accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with respect to smooth transition, related to trade and investment.

12. The Governments of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Kiribati and Sri Lanka received support on stakeholder engagement, strengthening the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through participatory processes. This work informed the development and delivery of capacity-building material, as well as the development of a planning and assessment framework for quality engagement.

13. The secretariat is building its own capacity to engage a range of stakeholders. The ESCAP Sustainable Business Network and its task forces have been refocused to align them with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Avenues are being explored for strengthening engagement with the academic and think tank communities. Multi-stakeholder consultations and partnerships have been facilitated, including through existing networks, such as the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade and the Asia-Pacific Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Network for Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries.

14. Important guidance on the support offered by the secretariat has been provided by *Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Outlook* and *Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing Asia-Pacific*, published with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and ADB in the framework of partnership on the Sustainable Development Goals; five subregional reports underlining perspectives on sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific; and subregional meetings preparatory to the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

III. Progress of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

A. Means of implementation and partnership

1. Data and statistics

Current status

15. The Asia-Pacific statistical community has developed a collective vision and framework for action, subsequently endorsed by the Committee on Statistics at its fifth session and the Commission at its seventy-third session. ESCAP support for statistics focuses on the five action areas of the collective vision and framework for action,[3] which correspond to the five opportunities for regional cooperation outlined in the road map.

Progress made

16. The ESCAP statistical database and Sustainable Development Goal portal provided infrastructure for the production of analytical products to support regional Sustainable Development Goal progress assessment and evaluation of the availability of global Sustainable Development Goal indicators. ESCAP produced diagnostic and assessment tools that assist national statistical systems in the region to identify gaps and opportunities for developing a national data plan. These include a national statistical systems review tool and a policy-data integration tool.

17. ESCAP developed methodologies, guidelines and tools to support national follow-up and review processes. These include the following: an environment statistics diagnostic tool; an inventory template and training materials on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics; a framework and guidelines for improving disaster-related statistics; a framework to produce reliable statistics for reporting on the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific; training materials

[3] The five action areas are as follows: engaging users and investing in statistics; assuring quality and instilling trust in statistics; integrated statistics for integrated analysis; modernizing statistical business processes; and having the requisite skills set.

on the integration of data sources for economic statistics and informal sector statistics, guidelines and a template for producing national vital statistics reports; guidelines on setting up national coordination mechanisms and national strategies for civil registration and vital statistics; a generic tool and guidelines for assessing national and local policies in support of leaving no one behind; and an online data hub.

18. ESCAP engaged in technical cooperation activities for national statistical development under four regional initiatives: (a) economic statistics; (b) environment statistics; (c) civil registration and vital statistics; and (d) population and social statistics. Most member States in the region participated in capacity-building activities in 2017 under at least one of the four initiatives.

19. The Thematic Working Group on Statistics has prioritized coordinated support to member States in national follow-up and review. The initial focus is on developing a set of tools for assessing and visualizing baselines and progress with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals and providing technical support on the application of such tools in selected countries in their voluntary national review processes. This priority was identified through the analysis of an inventory of ongoing and planned statistical capacity development assistance for the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific. In addition, the Thematic Working Group on Statistics worked with the Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Societies and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat to organize a regional workshop in 2017 on strengthening the collection and use of international migration data in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

20. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 17.18 and 17.19 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

2. Technology

Current status

21. Member countries are seeking stronger and alternative means of using science, technology and innovation to build productive capacities and to address pressing social and environmental challenges. Member States are increasingly realizing that frontier technologies and e-commerce offer new opportunities and challenges to address these national problems. Realizing that they need to take ownership and lead or proactively seek domestic and international technology transfer, policymakers, leaders of research institutions and entrepreneurs are seeking means to promote technology transfers from research institutions to firms and internationally.

22. Member countries are seeking to further strengthen their science, technology and innovation infrastructure and capacities through public-private partnerships. Science, technology and innovation parks are one mechanism through which Governments can encourage technology development and innovation activities.

23. There are significant systemic and capacity challenges to support social enterprises and impact investment, such as the need to put in place coherent strategies that support social enterprises and impact investment, the need to build the capacities of social enterprises and impact investors, and the need to ensure that such support results in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Progress made

24. The International Conference on Green Technologies for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals provided a platform for policymakers and sector experts to strengthen regional cooperation for the adoption, application and development of green technologies. The workshop organized jointly by ESCAP and the World Intellectual Property Organization on building the innovation and technological capacities of least developed countries in Asia and the Pacific provided policymakers from least developed countries with concrete suggestions on how to support technology transfer domestically and internationally.

25. The Asia-Pacific Declaration on Social Enterprise and Impact Investment of September 2017 established a partnership between ESCAP, the British Council, the Social Enterprise World Forum, the Global Steering Group for Impact Investment, the Global Social Entrepreneurship Network, the Asian Venture Philanthropy Network and the Ākina Foundation in order to build a community of leaders across the Asia-Pacific region with the aim of sharing experience and pooling expertise on the growth of social enterprise and impact investment in support of the 2030 Agenda.

26. The report entitled *Innovative Financing for Development in Asia and the Pacific: Government Policies on Impact Investment and Public Finance for Innovation*, published by ESCAP jointly with the Science and Technology Policy Institute of the Republic of Korea, provided a collection of case studies on promoting inclusive innovation that leaves no one behind and on introducing innovative financing mechanisms to support social enterprises and impact investment, among others. ESCAP published national surveys on the state of social enterprises (Pakistan and the Philippines) and working papers on digital and virtual currencies for sustainable development and on artificial intelligence in Asia and the Pacific.

27. The 2017 Economic Forum of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, held in Dushanbe under the theme of innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals in the Programme's region, underscored the importance of technological, economic and institutional innovation to enable the attainment of the Goals. The Forum recommended the development of a regional innovation strategy with a view to (a) realizing regional synergies, and (b) sharing and exchanging innovation practices, initiatives and policies in support of sustainable development.

28. ESCAP and the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology, a specialized regional institute of ESCAP, have pursued several activities in collaboration with other organizations. This has included capacity-building on science, technology and innovation policy and new and emerging technologies in China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand; regional events on nanotechnology for safe and sustainable development and on innovation strategies for sustainable development through the water-energy-food nexus; and an international workshop on science, technology, innovation and management for water sustainability, as well as an international innovation fair and international workshop on supporting innovative entrepreneurs and the role of technology transfer.

29. The online periodicals *Asia-Pacific Tech Monitor* and *Value Added Technology Information Service (VATIS) Update* on biotechnology, food processing, new and renewable energy, ozone layer protection and waste management continued to deliver the latest technological information to member States.

30. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 9.3, 9.5, 17.6, 17.7 and 17.8 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

3. Finance

Current status

31. Developing countries in Asia will need to invest $26 trillion in infrastructure between 2016 and 2030 to effectively support the 2030 Agenda, equivalent to approximately 6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) annually, and more than 2 per cent of GDP higher than current investment levels. For least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries of the region, such financing needs would be even higher, at roughly 10.5 per cent of GDP. Public resources alone are unlikely to be sufficient to meet this demand. ESCAP is therefore supporting countries in developing appropriate policy and institutional frameworks for public-private partnerships.

32. Small and medium-sized enterprises constitute the largest number of companies in any country and play a fundamental role in the creation of employment, the development of skills and the diffusion of technological knowledge. However, small and medium-sized enterprises often have difficulties in accessing financing from the formal financial system.

Progress made

33. A joint policy paper by ESCAP and Oxfam entitled *Taxing for Shared Prosperity: Policy Options for the Asia-Pacific Region* was published, and a book volume on tax policies for sustainable development will be published in early 2018. ESCAP published papers entitled "PPP policy, legal and institutional frameworks in Asia and the Pacific", "Public-private partnerships for cross-border infrastructure development" and "Tapping capital markets and institutional investors for infrastructure development", as well as *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2017: Investing in Infrastructure for an Inclusive and Sustainable Future*, which covers infrastructure financing issues. ESCAP also prepared a working paper entitled "Estimating infrastructure financing needs in Asia-Pacific least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States", and developed country guidance on public-private partnerships for sustainable development that was presented at a regional event in December 2017.

34. The integration of the second meeting of the ESCAP Eminent Expert Group on Tax Policy and Public Expenditure Management for Sustainable Development and the Workshop on Domestic Public Resource Mobilization for Sustainable Development provided an opportunity for representatives from finance ministries and tax authorities to learn from and interact with a group of renowned scholars and experts on public finance. In addition, three subregional and five national studies were prepared to support capacity-building events on infrastructure financing strategies (Georgia, Nepal, the Philippines, Samoa and Viet Nam) and five national workshops took place to discuss the importance of infrastructure financing for sustainable development in 2017 (Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia and Nepal). Workshops, policy dialogues and expert group meetings have been organized on domestic public resource mobilization for sustainable development, tax and public finance, small and medium-sized enterprise finance and infrastructure financing strategies.

35. Strengthened collaboration between ESCAP and ADB, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and Oxfam, on public finance and tax matters, can be reported. ESCAP continues to work with the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre of the International Monetary Fund and, in November 2017, conducted a workshop with the Samoan Ministry of Finance on medium-term expenditure for representatives of finance and planning and central banks, with country presentations on current status and challenges and sharing of good practice.

36. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 1.1, 8.3, 8.10, 9.3, 10.1 and 17.16 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

4. Policy coherence

Current status

37. The 2030 Agenda has set a new standard for synergies across economic development, social policies and services, trade, and natural resources and environmental sustainability, and marks a global commitment to address inequality and overcome global poverty. Although the global agendas complement each other, linkages, intersections and systemic interdependencies are often not made explicit. As a result, countries are confronted with different agendas that are hard to translate into local action.

38. There is increasing awareness of the need to continue to foster synergies across economic, social and environmental policy systems in countries, and to identify trade-offs and reconcile domestic policy objectives with internationally agreed objectives. Coherence also needs to be addressed between the diverse action of multiple actors and stakeholders (Governments, international and regional organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector) as well as between different sources of finance (public, private, international and domestic). There is increasing awareness of the need and potential for evidence-based policies.

Progress made

39. The ESCAP methodological tool on *Integrated Approaches for Sustainable Development Goals Planning: The Case of Goal 6 on Water and Sanitation* was published.

40. ESCAP supported the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals with the means of implementation of the New Urban Agenda under a new partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), focusing on providing policy assistance in the areas of financing, data and partnerships with non-State actors. ESCAP co-chaired the United Nations Development Group Asia-Pacific Task Team on Urbanization, which promotes policy coherence on urban issues at both the regional and the country levels among 20 member agencies.

41. ESCAP and UN-Habitat collaborated to support policy coherence in mainstreaming climate change responses, including the nationally determined contribution priorities of selected countries in the region, into current and forthcoming national urban policies.

42. The Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade Expert Group on Trade and the Sustainable Development Goals was established and nodal points as well as capacity-building needs were identified for Bangladesh,

Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Nepal. Policy advice was also provided to Afghanistan on trade and the Sustainable Development Goals.

43. ESCAP published *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2017: Channelling Trade and Investment into Sustainable Development*, which focused on the means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. A handbook on policies, promotion and facilitation of FDI for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific was published in October 2017. Good practice case studies, tools for evidence-based policymaking and the negotiation of agreements for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and publications relating to the negotiation of development-oriented preferential trade agreements, intellectual property rights and non-tariff barriers were issued, and online training materials were developed as contributions to existing courses.

44. Workshops and training on FDI promotion and facilitation were held in Myanmar and Uzbekistan. The annual meeting and capacity-building events were organized for the Asia-Pacific FDI Network for Least Developed and Landlocked Developing States, at which the linkages between FDI, innovation and the Sustainable Development Goals were also discussed. Regional and national workshops were organized on trade agreements with respect to graduation from least developed country status, and trade policies for sustainable development.

45. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 1.1, 8.3, 8.10, 9.3, 10.1 and 17.16 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

5. North-South, South-South, international and regional partnerships

Current status

46. Comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires partnerships and the deployment of new solutions between countries and across subregions. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region could benefit from North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, and from the sharing of good practices and home-grown approaches.

47. There is increasing awareness of the key role that multi-stakeholder partnerships will play in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The effectiveness of multi-stakeholder partnerships, while dependent on many factors, will be increasingly tied to their ability to manage and share knowledge and expertise about the issues, processes and solutions that they are promoting.

Progress made

48. Guidelines on the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships were developed in coordination with the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability. The guidelines provide practical guidance for ESCAP member States, policymakers and practitioners on building and sustaining successful multi-stakeholder partnerships aimed at supporting the progress of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

49. A workshop was organized jointly by ESCAP and the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability with the aim of introducing, validating and complementing the issues identified in the

guidelines and other elements related to the process of implementing successful multi-stakeholder partnerships in the region.

50. A new partnership with UN-Habitat convened over 70 stakeholders from 17 Asia-Pacific countries in Bangkok for a regional partners forum. This event served as an expert group meeting to discuss stakeholder partnerships in the implementation of the outcomes of the New Urban Agenda and the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Consensus developed over the need for a specific review and study paper on issues of municipal finance to support stakeholder implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda at the local level. The event was planned as part of a continuous dialogue with partners leading to the World Urban Forum in February 2018, and the first global report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to the Economic and Social Council is expected in 2018.

51. ESCAP has worked to support multi-stakeholder partnerships to upgrade regional transport infrastructure and facilities and increase the number of ESCAP member States that are signatories or parties to global, regional and subregional transport-related agreements.

52. ESCAP and the ASEAN secretariat jointly launched a report entitled *Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A Framework for Action*.

53. ESCAP and subregional organizations such as ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat are successfully cooperating on implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific and in synergy with subregional road maps, visions and plans of actions. For example, the relevant priorities of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific have been mainstreamed into the Pacific Road Map for Sustainable Development, developed with the substantive and financial support of ESCAP. The Pacific Road Map for Sustainable Development was endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum leaders in September 2017 and will guide and consolidate the Pacific's efforts to implement and monitor the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, with ESCAP playing a significant role in supporting efforts for follow-up and review.

54. The outputs reported have supported progress towards target 17.7 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

B. Thematic issues

1. Leaving no one behind (social development)

Current status

55. Despite high and enduring economic growth and significant progress in terms of poverty eradication, inequality persists in the Asia-Pacific region and in some instances has intensified. Growing disparities in income and wealth, as well as in inequality of opportunity, disproportionately affect women and vulnerable groups. These barriers require transformative measures to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

56. There is increasing awareness of the need for data, information and analysis of the challenges facing countries in the region, and that

evidence-based policy recommendations, country good practices, stakeholder engagement and regional cooperation can increase the capacity of member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Progress made

57. ESCAP launched the flagship publication entitled *Sustainable Social Development in Asia and the Pacific: Towards a People-Centred Transformation*, which contains a summary of the social development gaps in the region and an outline of the key priorities and resources needed for a people-centred transformation. ESCAP also organized the Strategic Dialogue on Poverty and Inequality in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok to identify the challenges faced by the region in measuring and addressing poverty and inequality and sharing good practices.

58. ESCAP published a policy paper series on inequality of opportunity, with four papers measuring inequality of access to education, employment, clean energy and health. The policy papers are accompanied by a guide on how to measure inequality of opportunity. A study on multidimensional inequality in Indonesia was prepared and discussed at the Indonesia Development Forum 2017. The study reviewed progress in key opportunities and highlighted persisting rural-urban disparities and an increasing gap in educational attainment between the richest and poorest quintiles.

59. As a part of its efforts to promote women's empowerment through entrepreneurship, ESCAP prepared a study entitled *Fostering Women's Entrepreneurship in ASEAN: Transforming Prospects, Transforming Societies*.

60. ESCAP organized a regional forum on gender-responsive budgeting in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, resulting in increased momentum in the advocacy of the importance of gender-responsive budgeting and enhanced dialogue and partnerships around sustainable financing for achieving gender equality and the 2030 Agenda.

61. ESCAP prepared a report entitled *Realizing Youth Inclusion for a More Sustainable Asia and the Pacific* to broaden understanding of the multitude of institutional and sociocultural barriers that youth face in realizing their potential, and established a youth policy toolbox as an online repository of good practices and policies to assist Governments in developing policies for harnessing the potential of youth. The toolbox has been launched in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, the Philippines and six Pacific island countries. ESCAP also convened an Interregional Youth Policy Forum in Bangkok in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic Commission for Africa to share good practices across the regions in facilitating the school-to-work transition of youth.

62. To enhance the evidence base for policy options, ESCAP prepared a report entitled *Addressing the Challenges of Population Ageing in Asia and the Pacific: Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*, in which it argues that with effective policies, population ageing can herald a period of sustained progress. A special issue of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* (vol. 32, No. 1, August 2017) focused on population ageing, covering themes such as human resource requirements for meeting the needs of an ageing society; the availability and use of appropriate technology to enhance access by older persons to services, including health and long-term care services; and gender dimensions of ageing in the Asia-Pacific region. ESCAP convened the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Third Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing to

accelerate the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in order to foster an inclusive society for all ages.

63. ESCAP organized subregional capacity-building workshops on income security for older persons in the Pacific and in South Asia. The workshops focused on the design of policies for income security for older persons and the importance of providing sustainable systems of income security in ageing societies.

64. ESCAP produced a report entitled *Building Disability-Inclusive Societies in Asia and the Pacific: Assessing Progress of the Incheon Strategy*, a comprehensive regional progress report on the participation of persons with disabilities in development opportunities at the midpoint review of the implementation of the Incheon Strategy. ESCAP convened the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, in Beijing. The Meeting adopted the Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy, to foster disability-inclusive development through a comprehensive regional policy action plan involving Governments and other stakeholders over the subsequent five years.

65. ESCAP published a report entitled *Towards Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Asia-Pacific Region: Challenges and Opportunities*, in which it provides up-to-date information on migration trends, highlights key policy issues with respect to ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration in the Asia-Pacific region and provides recommendations to help guide discussions at the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which was convened by ESCAP in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration and other United Nations agencies. The Meeting helped the region develop an Asia-Pacific perspective on safe, orderly and regular migration to feed into the global stocktaking meeting on the global compact on migration that was held in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, from 4 to 6 December 2017. ESCAP also published four studies on the links between international migration and development in North and Central Asia.

66. ESCAP developed a series of online training tools to support policymakers in Asia and the Pacific in their efforts with respect to social protection, youth and disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction.

67. Under the Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, joint initiatives have been carried out including research and analysis, intergovernmental consensus-building and stakeholder engagement towards advancing gender equality in the Asia-Pacific region. Specifically, an analytical paper on financing for gender equality in Asia and the Pacific has been developed, which proposes key recommendations to enhance investment in women and girls to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. The Thematic Working Group has also undertaken joint advocacy efforts, including on prevention of violence against women and children.

68. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets and means of implementation 1.3, 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.a, 5.b, 8.3, 8.5, 8.8, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 10.7 and 16.12 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

2. Disaster risk reduction and resilience

Current status

69. In the 2017 *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report*, it is underlined that disaster risk is outpacing resilience. Notwithstanding the rapid economic growth and incisive reductions in absolute poverty levels that have come to characterize development progress in the region over the past few decades, critical vulnerabilities are on the rise. There is a clear relationship between the impact of disasters, poverty traps, growing inequality and heightened potential for conflict. The *Report* finds that each disaster leads to a 0.13-point increase in the Gini coefficient.

70. A strong economic and social case has been created for strengthening the regional cooperation mechanism for transboundary flood forecasting and early warning system in the Indus and Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna basins.

71. The Strategic Plan 2017–2021 of the ESCAP/World Meteorological Organization Typhoon Committee has been aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. This alignment serves as a blueprint for maximizing the contribution of other ESCAP-facilitated regional cooperation mechanisms to the implementation of the regional road map.

Progress made

72. ESCAP released the 2017 *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report* and conducted outreach activities in four subregions to promote policy reforms to address disaster risks, capacity development and vulnerabilities as part of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, ongoing research provided the basis for developing regional cooperation mechanisms to address two transboundary risks, namely sand and dust storms and transboundary floods, and to define the service lines of such mechanisms. Regional guidebooks were published on how to integrate disaster risk reduction into related development activities.

73. ESCAP promoted effective regional efforts to strengthen disaster risk assessment of slow-onset transboundary disasters (such as El Niño) in collaboration with the Thematic Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism. A "build back better" approach in the aftermath of the 2015–2016 El Niño phenomenon has also been promoted through a joint analytical product with the Thematic Working Group.

74. Within the context of the programme of work of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management, South-South cooperation has been facilitated. The capacities of countries to protect cities and world heritage sites from seismic hazards through information- and expertise-sharing was enhanced. In this regard, site visits to Bam, Islamic Republic of Iran, and to Thimphu on seismic microzonation were undertaken, with a follow-up plan of action under development.

75. An expert group meeting was convened to discuss regional cooperation in early warning for transboundary river basin floods, flash floods and landslides in Asia and the Pacific in order to define the regional cooperation mechanism for such hazards.

76. The Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, at its fifth session, supported the efforts of secretariat to put in place an Asia-Pacific disaster resilience network to promote greater coherence across the implementation of global development frameworks, as well as coordination among members of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism and its Thematic Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience. The secretariat is taking up its implementation in 2018 with key partners including the Thematic Working Group.

77. The Thematic Working Group has made significant progress in three key areas: (a) advancing coherence in the implementation of disaster risk reduction and resilience across the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed frameworks, an important guiding principle of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030; (b) aligning the work of the United Nations with subregional organizations; and (c) achieving a coherent regional response to the 2015–2016 El Niño phenomenon.[4]

78. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 1.5 and 11.4 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

3. Climate change

Current status

79. The Asia-Pacific region contributes to half of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions. The newest estimates for the Asia-Pacific region show that growth will be significantly impacted by climate change. Without climate action, GDP in the region could decrease by as much as 3.3 per cent by 2050 and 10 per cent by 2100, relative to the base case. The costs of attaining a 2 degrees Celsius scenario for the region are estimated at approximately 0.1 per cent of GDP annually or 4 per cent by 2050, relative to business as usual. The co-benefits of climate action offset many of the costs of emissions reduction and emerging advanced technologies offer future prospects of lower abatement costs.

Progress made

80. A regional network of climate finance practitioners was established to exchange knowledge, good practices and lessons learned. Scoping studies were published for Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, identifying opportunities in the financial sector to support low-carbon climate-resilient investments in climate mitigation and adaptation projects. With support from the national champions networks, tangible action was taken in the beneficiary countries, including a regulation on sustainable finance issued by the financial services authority in Indonesia, green banking guidelines issued by the State Bank of Pakistan, a concept for the development of a climate finance charter in the Philippines and a multi-stakeholder process for the development of a sustainable development financing road map with climate finance elements in Sri Lanka.

81. ESCAP published the report entitled *Finance for Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific: A Regional Action Agenda to Access Debt Capital Markets* and *Responding to the Climate Change Challenge in Asia and the Pacific: Achieving the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)*.

[4] See E/ESCAP/CDR(5)/INF/2 for details.

82. The importance and substance of linkages between climate change and urban development in national-level policy frameworks have been analysed and policy recommendations have been developed that are influencing policymaking in project countries such as the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka.

83. Asia-Pacific Climate Week 2017 was convened jointly with the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) DTU Partnership, UNDP, ADB, the International Emissions Trading Association, the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies and others. It culminated in a regional climate action agenda.

84. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets and means of implementation 11.b, 13.2 and 13.b of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

4. Management of natural resources

Current status

85. Throughout Asia and the Pacific, ecosystems, including on land, in fresh water and in oceans, are under threat owing to pollution, unsustainable management, levels of extraction higher than their carrying capacity, rapid urbanization and climate change. The productivity of the agricultural sector remains lower than other sectors. The region lags behind in terms of material resource efficiency and energy efficiency, and vast disparities are observed between countries. Inequitable access to resources, especially for the most vulnerable — including small holders in developing countries, women and indigenous people — is an impediment to poverty alleviation.

Progress made

86. ESCAP has produced analytical papers and reports, including the note by the secretariat entitled "Sustainable management of natural resources in Asia and the Pacific: trends, challenges and opportunities in resource efficiency and policy perspectives" (E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/2), in which it highlights policy pathways to promote resource efficiency, and publications entitled *Analysing Resource Efficiency Transitions in Asia and the Pacific* and *Gender, the Environment and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific*.

87. A pilot study reviewing the extent to which oceans are integrated into national and subnational plans and policies has been conducted.

88. Through its specialized regional institutes, namely the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization and the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture, ESCAP worked to promote regional and technical cooperation for sustainable agricultural development, including sustainable agricultural mechanization, by engaging government as well as non-government stakeholders. ESCAP facilitated institutional capacity-building for member States on sustainable agricultural development and sustainable agricultural mechanization, covering both policy formulation and technical skills. ESCAP has co-organized capacity-building and best-practice-sharing events on sustainable agriculture, resilience to climate change, integrated water policies, integrated straw management, conservation and the sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

89. Advocacy and outreach on the urban nexus approach was continued at regional and international forums to increase awareness and promote the benefits of integrated resource management in cities.

90. The Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific was co-organized in Bangkok with UNEP in September 2017 and resulted in the adoption of a ministerial declaration with a view to collaborative action to ensure that environment and development agendas are approached in an integrated way, addressing promotion of sustainable management of natural resources, urban planning and spatial development, sustainable agriculture practices and advancement of the green economy to reduce waste and pollution.

91. The normative work of ESCAP resulted in the adoption in principle by participating member States of harmonized regional standards for the testing of three types of agricultural machinery, to align them with the goal of sustainable agricultural development. The normative work also led to the development of an initial set of guidelines to facilitate the creation of a regional database on sustainable agricultural mechanization.

92. The Thematic Working Group on Resource-Efficient Growth finalized the draft of the ASEAN-United Nations Action Plan on Environment and Climate Change (2016–2020), which was later adopted by the ministers of environment of ASEAN in September 2017 at their ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment in Brunei Darussalam. An information document on resource efficiency and pollution in Asia and the Pacific was drafted by members of the Thematic Working Group for the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment. The Thematic Working Group's task team on sustainable urbanization supported the Asia-Pacific Regional Partners Forum "Quito+1" in November 2017 that resulted in a guidance document on implementing the New Urban Agenda in line with the 2030 Agenda in the region.

93. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets and means of implementation 1.1, 2.4, 2.5, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.a, 6.b, 7.1, 7.a, 7.b, 11.3, 11.6, 11.b, 12.2, 12.b, 14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 14.6 and 15.1 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

5. Connectivity for the 2030 Agenda

Current status

94. While the transport sector remains one of the main drivers of economic growth, it is also the second largest producer of carbon dioxide emissions globally. Transport development has not yet optimized the comparative advantages of operational efficiency and integrated multimodal transport from the perspective of road users, freight movement and the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely the social, economic and environmental.

95. Trade costs remain high, particularly among Asia-Pacific countries from different subregions and for countries with special needs. The ESCAP-led Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation in 2017 reveals that countries have made good progress in implementing measures under the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and are moving towards paperless trade. However, they are still finding it difficult to implement electronic exchange and legally recognize trade data and documents across borders, despite the significant reductions in transaction costs and improvements in regulatory compliance that this would bring. The level of

B18-00081

implementation of inclusive trade facilitation measures that are specifically targeted at small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector and women remains low.

Progress made

96. ESCAP published *Transport and Communication Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific: No. 87 – Transport and Sustainable Development Goals*, *Monograph Series on Sustainable and Inclusive Transport: Assessment of Urban Transport Systems*, technical material on regional progress on the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety and maps of the integrated intermodal transport network, comprising the Asian Highway network, the Trans-Asian Railway network and the network of dry ports of international importance.

97. ESCAP published *Artificial Intelligence and Broadband Divide: State of ICT connectivity in Asia and the Pacific* to deepen understanding of the digital components of emerging technologies and help identify gaps and possible courses of action.

98. ESCAP updated the Asia-Pacific information superhighway topology in the ASEAN subregion, with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Brunei Darussalam focusing on the digital economy while the northern corridor — Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam, countries with lower broadband expansion — focuses on connectivity.

99. ESCAP led the development of an integrated intermodal transport framework as a key driver for sustainable development. For the assessment of urban transport systems in cities and countries in this region, ESCAP developed the sustainable urban transport index, which was piloted in four cities (Colombo, Hanoi, Jakarta and Kathmandu). ESCAP provided advisory support for data collection and analysis, as well as a capacity-building workshop for countries and cities of South and South-East Asia.

100. Road safety requires a high-level of predictability of both road infrastructure design standards and traffic regulations. Aiming to create a harmonized driving environment across the region, ESCAP developed a new annex to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network to lay down standards for selected road safety facilities.

101. ESCAP, through its regional institute the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development, conducted capacity-building activities in cooperation with national partners from ministries and agencies responsible for information and communications technology (ICT) and civil service training institutes, and developed a new module of the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders, on data-driven smart Government, to enhance policymakers' and civil servants' understanding of the role of data in supporting evidence-based policymaking and in implementing and monitoring their progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

102. ESCAP published several reports and studies on trade facilitation and connectivity in 2017, including those entitled *Digital Trade Facilitation in Asia and the Pacific* (Studies in Trade, Investment and Innovation, No. 87) and *Trade Facilitation and Better Connectivity for an Inclusive Asia and Pacific*

(joint publication with ADB).[5] It also published reports and an interactive database based on the results of the Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation conducted in collaboration with all the other United Nations regional commissions and the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific.[6] Baseline studies for establishing trade and transport facilitation monitoring mechanisms and addressing barriers along subregional corridors in South Asia were completed in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

103. ESCAP, together with ADB and the Government of Indonesia, co-hosted the Eighth Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum, on the theme "Trade facilitation innovations for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific". ESCAP also organized over a dozen workshops on trade facilitation and paperless trade in 2017. Notable events included a masterclass on digital customs and single windows organized jointly by ESCAP and the World Customs Organization and co-hosted with the Korea Customs Service of the Republic of Korea, and two regional workshops to build the capacity for trade single window interoperability in collaboration with the Eurasian Economic Commission.

104. Five ESCAP countries signed the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific in 2017. Others indicated intent to join through accession. The Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation, at its third meeting, developed technical and legal readiness self-assessment tools to be used to identify barriers to cross-border paperless trade and develop action plans and pilot projects to be implemented with the support of bilateral and other development partners.

105. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets and means of implementation 1.1, 1.2, 2.3, 2.a, 3.6, 3.9, 4.4, 7.3, 9.1, 9.4, 9.a, 9.c, 11.2, 11.6, 13.1, 16.2, 17.6 and 17.8, of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

6. Energy

Current status

106. Nearly half a billion people in Asia and the Pacific still lack access to electricity. More than 80 per cent of the countries in the region have targets to improve energy efficiency and increase the share of renewable energy in the region. More than assisting in energy supply needs, renewable sources of energy are receiving further impetus from the climate agenda. While the region has emerged as the producer and provider of most of the world's renewable energy technology, the overall trend within the region is diversification of the domestic energy mix, depending on national and subregional context. Given the uneven distribution of energy resources in the Asia-Pacific region and the need for transition of the energy sector towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7, there is good scope for coordinated regional action to achieve optimal deployment and utilization of energy resources through enhanced connectivity, economic cooperation and integration.

[5] Manila, 2017. Available from www.adb.org/publications/trade-facilitation-connectivity-inclusive-asia-pacific.

[6] See https://unnext.unescap.org/AP-TFSurvey2017/global.html.

Progress made

107. Various activities such as multi-stakeholder dialogues and field projects have been undertaken to enhance the understanding of national government officials and other stakeholders of policy options and strategies for sustainable energy development at both the national and the regional levels, leading to 60 measured references in publications and scientific journals to ESCAP activities and knowledge products in the area of energy and over 10,000 visits to the Asia-Pacific Energy Portal.

108. As an improved knowledge platform for Sustainable Development Goal 7, the Asia-Pacific Energy Portal has become a "one-stop shop" aggregator of open-access energy information and a unique analytical tool for the Asia-Pacific region. It is currently being updated to provide decision makers with the required knowledge platform to contribute to an informed debate about the achievement of this Goal during the review of the Goals at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in New York in 2018.

109. To support the evidence-based review and evaluation of the implementation of Goal 7 for the benefit of member States, a report entitled *A Global Tracking Framework 2017: Regional Assessment Report — Asia-Pacific Progress in* Sustainable *Energy* was developed by ESCAP in cooperation with ADB. In the publication, progress at the regional and country levels is reviewed, the key drivers behind progress are examined and the major challenges to achieving energy access, energy efficiency and renewable energy objectives are identified.

110. Two expert working groups were established, namely the Expert Working Group on Universal Access to Modern Energy Services, Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Cleaner Use of Fossil Fuels, and the Expert Working Group on Energy Connectivity. The establishment of the Committee on Energy and the two expert working groups provided institutional mechanisms to ensure full preparation for the Second Asian and Pacific Energy Forum and enhance continuous engagement with member States to implement the ESCAP programme of work on energy.

111. ESCAP organized a high-level policy dialogue on Sustainable Development Goal 7, a ministerial round table on regional cooperation for sustainable energy, focused events at Expo 2017 and the Eighth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development.

112. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

IV. Matters calling for the attention of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

113. Member States may wish to take note of the progress on implementation of the regional road map and suggest modalities to strengthen its application in Asia and the Pacific.

114. Member States may wish to provide recommendations on how future reports on progress on implementation of the regional road map could incorporate national-level experience.